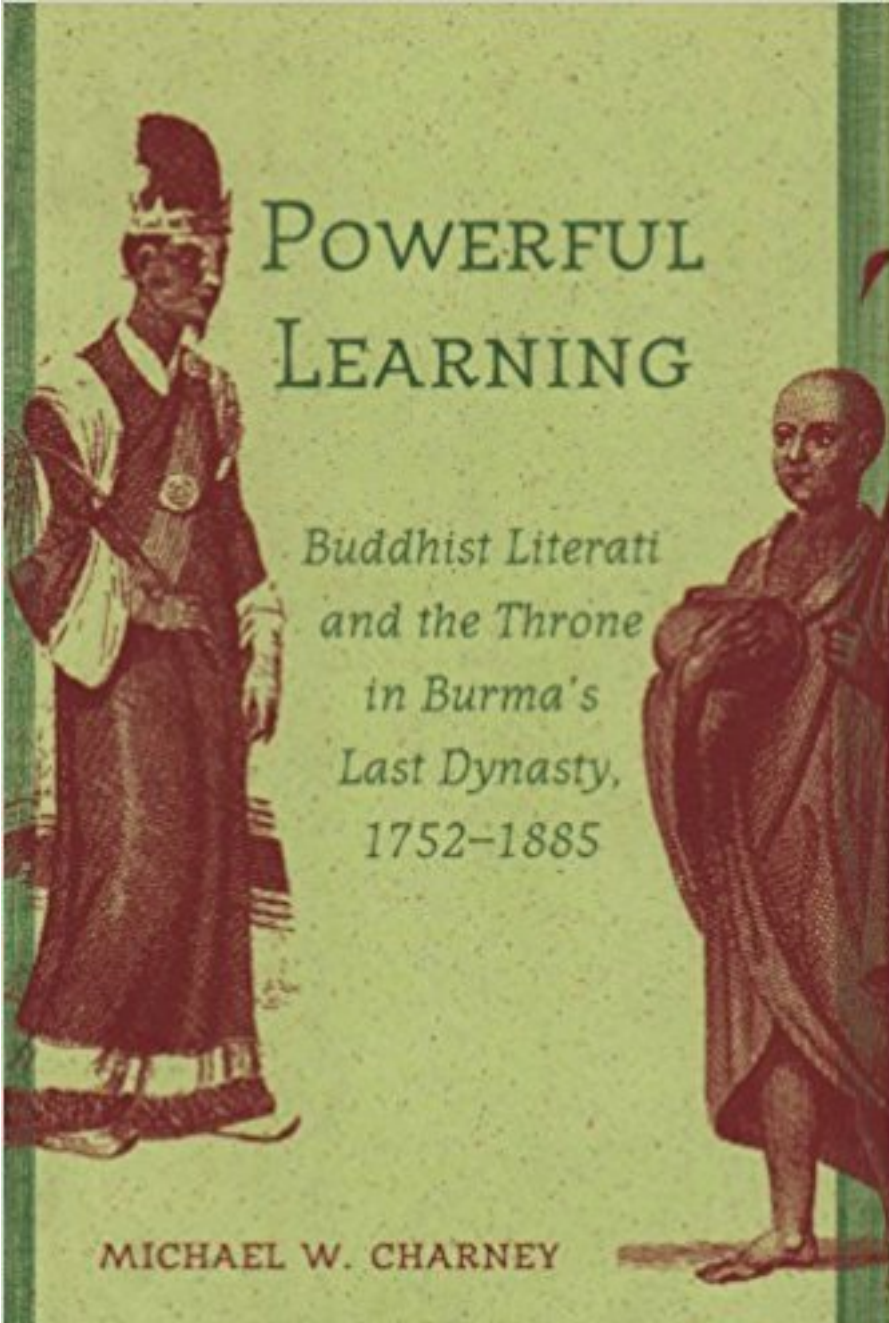




POWERFUL LEARNING

*Buddhist Literati
and the Throne
in Burma's
Last Dynasty,
1752–1885*

MICHAEL W. CHARNEY

Powerful Learning



Buddhist Literati and the Throne in
Burma's Last Dynasty, 1752–1885

Michael W. Charney

CENTERS FOR SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Ann Arbor

2006

To Atsuko



who has traveled with me to the
far corners of the world

Copyright © 2006

The Centers for South and Southeast Asian Studies

All rights reserved

Published in the United States of America by
The Centers for South and Southeast Asian Studies

Manufactured in the United States of America

Ⓢ Printed on acid-free paper

2009 2008 2007 2006 4 3 2 1

No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form
or by any means, electronic, mechanical, or otherwise,
without the written permission of the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Charney, Michael W.

Powerful learning : Buddhist literati and the throne in
Burma's last dynasty, 1752-1885 / Michael W. Charney.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

9780891480938 (cloth : alk. paper)

0891480935 (cloth : alk. paper)

1. Buddhists—Burma—Intellectual life—19th century.

2. Buddhism and state—Burma—History—19th century.

3. Burma—History—Konbaung dynasty, 1752-1885.

DS529.7 .C53 2006

959.1/03 22

2006051697

Contents

List of Figures ix

Acknowledgments xi

Introduction 1

chapter one / The Rise of a Regional Monastic Community 18

chapter two / The Social, Demographic, and Political Context 50

chapter three / Royal Ancestors 70

chapter four / Monastic Reform 89

chapter five / History 108

chapter six / Burman-ness 125

chapter seven / European Learning 146

chapter eight / The New Information Technology 181

chapter nine / Sangha and Dhammaraja 201

chapter ten / The Mandalay-ket-thas 220

chapter eleven / The State 241

Epilogue and Conclusion 260

Bibliography 271

Index 287

List of Figures

- FIG. 1. Map of Precolonial Burma x
- FIG. 2. Maungdaung Village Today 2
- FIG. 3. Map of the Lower Chindwin 21
- FIG. 4. Map Showing Shin Nyanabhivamsa's Monastic Lineage 22
- FIG. 5. Map Showing Shin Aggadhammalankara's Monastic Lineage 24
- FIG. 6. Map Showing Shin Manimala's Monastic Lineage 25
- FIG. 7. The Lower Chindwin Landscape 33
- FIG. 8. Badon (Alon) Today 59
- FIG. 9. Europeans in an Early Nineteenth-Century Temple Mural 156
- FIG. 10. Photograph of Û Gaung 235

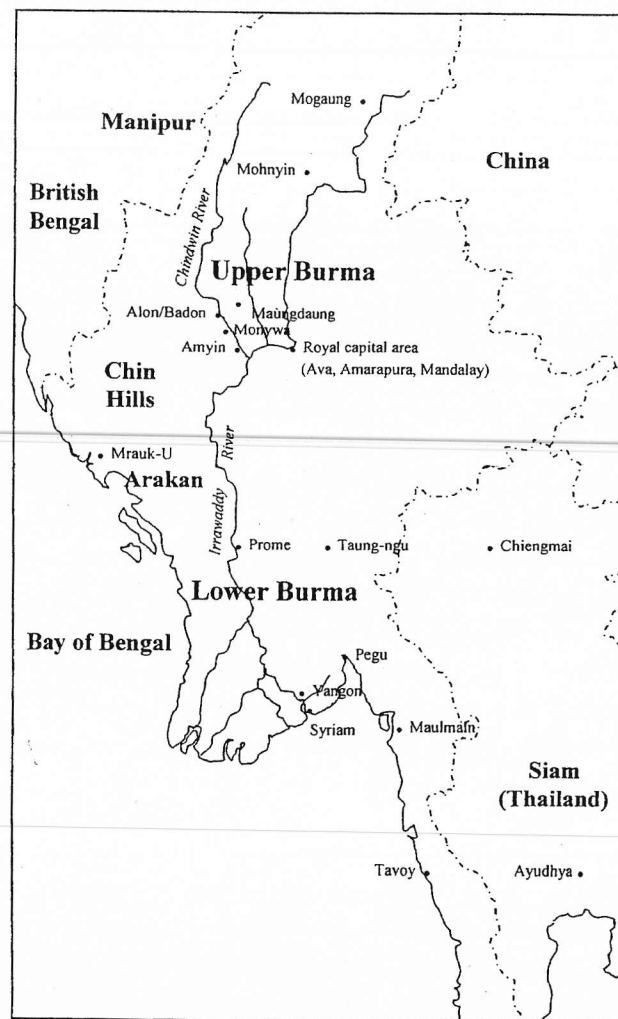


FIG. 1. Map of Precolonial Burma

Acknowledgments

The author owes a great debt of gratitude to many people who read the manuscript and provided valuable comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this manuscript. In December 2003, Victor Lieberman, Barbara Watson Andaya, George Dutton, and Atsuko Naono read the initial manuscript, which was completed about eight months after I returned from a research trip to the Lower Chindwin Valley. The revised manuscript was circulated over the course of 2004 to Ian Brown, William Clarence Smith, Andrew Goss, C. A. Bayly, and Pax Bobrow. In December of that year, while living in Chiengrai during the first portion of my sabbatical, I submitted the manuscript for publication. Gratitude is also owed to Ellen McCarthy of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Michigan for her help in bringing this manuscript to publication and the three anonymous referees who made additional and highly useful comments in June 2005. Other teachers, colleagues, and friends who have helped guide my research on Burma generally along its present course include Û Saw Tun, Elizabeth Collins, William H. ("Bill") Frederick, Ryuji Okudaira, John K. Whitmore, Nancy K. Florida, Juan Cole, Donald Stadtner, Elizabeth Moore, Andrew Huxley, Tilman Frasch, Joerg Schendel, San San Hnin Tun, John Okell, Patricia Herbert, Hong Liu, Swapna Bhattacharya, Ken Breazeale, Will Womack, and Jon Fernquest. Jon, a scholar of the First Taung-ngu period, on the topic of literature and history helped me to crystallize my ideas about some critical aspects of my writing and research methodology.

A great debt is also owed to two Burmese scholars of Burma, professors Û Toe Hla and Û Thaw Kaung, both of the Myanmar Historical Commission. They were of immense help during the period from December 2004 until May 2005, during which I conducted extended fieldwork in Burma (capping off numerous other research trips to Burma over the 1999–2003 period). Û Thaw Kaung's knowledge concerning Burmese historical research, both past and present, and his own research in particular aided me in making revisions to the manuscript in view of relatively recent

any not yet well known outside of Burma. Û Toe Hla, whose passion for the history of the Lower Chindwin and Mu River for the Kòn-baung period in general far surpasses that of anyone, shared numerous unpublished primary sources with me and proved invaluable. Û Aung Myo, Director of the National Archives and his staff also enriched my research there by both allowing access to the archives and providing unrelenting help in finding various source materials. Finally, the author would like to thank the British Ambassador (to the United Kingdom) Dr. Û Kyaw Win, Ministry of Culture, Myanmar, for their help in obtaining for me a multiple six-month multiple-entry research visa that made such a long research stay in Yangon possible. Research funding was generously provided by the British Academy, the British Academy Committee for Asian Studies, and the School of Oriental and African Studies.



Introduction

In late March 2003, the author traveled to Monywa on the lower course of the Chindwin River to learn more about the area, read the local literature, visit the local monasteries, and gain the kind of perspective that one can only get with one's own eyes, ears, and nose. Enlightening time was spent with the present-day local literati who gather at a local tea shop and talk about poems and local history while they drink tea. Local residents in Alon (Badon), where King Bò-daw-hpayà (r. 1781–1819) had maintained a princely palace and from whence his court pages and other officers came, told the author that their town receives very few foreign visitors, although two German anthropologists had visited the year before. Monywa is one of the hottest places in Burma and those tourists who do come are usually only passing through on their way between Pagan and Mandalay.

Nothing was as hot, or as unvisited by foreigners, as the village ahead. Maungdaung is a small, seemingly forgotten place to which no foreigners go; at least villagers told the author that this was the first time a foreigner had come to their village within living memory.¹ It takes two hours from Monywa and although the road is good up to Budalin, beyond that town it is merely a tarred up track, being so bumpy that Burmese take their cattle wagons and motorbikes not over it, but along the cattle tracks on either side. The villagers, after their surprise at the unannounced and rare arrival of a foreigner, generously led the author to the pagoda just north of the town center and next to it the location of the Maungdaung *hsayadaw's*



FIG. 2. Maungdaung Village Today

original forest monastery. The current Maungdaung *hsayadaw* led the author to the local historian, who presented two books he had written about famous people, all literati, who had played important roles in Kòn-baung history. It was refreshing to see that there is at least one place in the world where an historian is a social giant.

This book was written about people from this region, who, over two hundred years ago, moved from the periphery to the royal center and changed the world in Kòn-baung Burma. Indeed, one of the most significant developments of the Kòn-baung period was the rise of a small clique of monks and lay people from the Lower Chindwin area to commanding positions in the Burmese state and monastic order over the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This clique played a critical role in the creation of Kòn-baung state myths, influenced the ways in which the throne ruled and presented itself, and attempted, ultimately, to change the relationship between the throne and the state. Over the course of the nineteenth century, however, their intellectual con-

tributions were challenged by other Burmese literati, who sought in Western learning other ways in which to shape Burmese perspectives on state and society. In the process, the Burmese underwent a difficult transition from premodern to modern intellectual thought.

Until fairly recently, scholarship has asserted that the arrival of colonialism was the critical catalyst for this transition in Southeast Asia. Nineteenth century Western historians sought to demonstrate that the realized (or expected) colonial conquest was legitimate in view of the backwardness and savagery of indigenous societies. In the case of Burma, colonial-era scholarship focused mainly on British-Burma state relations, in which every action taken by the Kòn-baung court was viewed as a reaction to its impending doom at the hands of the British.² The small number of early postcolonial specialists on Southeast Asia generally contented themselves with the paradigms inherited from the colonial historians.³ In the last few decades, new scholarship on Southeast Asia has followed two main trends. Some scholars avoided the complications of colonial historiography by focusing on indigenous sources and themes that preceded the European conquest. In attempting to compensate for the weight given in the scholarship to the colonial period, and belabored by their struggle to establish the basic political chronologies in the context of economic and administrative change, they were left with little time to closely investigate discrepancies between unpublished manuscripts and print editions of the chronicles,⁴

2. This is true of the later chapters of Arthur P. Phayre, *History of Burma including Burma Proper, Pegu, Taungu, Tenasserim, and Arakan: From the Earliest Time to the End of the First War with British India* (London: Trübner, 1883) and of G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma: From the Earliest Times to 10 March 1824: The Beginning of the English Conquest* ((New York: Octagon Books, 1983). Both authors, as the titles of their books suggest, viewed indigenous history as ending with the arrival of British arms in the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824–1826). Possibly the worst example of this genre is J. G. Scott, *Burma: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924).

3. This is especially true of D. G. E. Hall, *Burma* (London: Longmans, 1950) and Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Modern Burma* (London: Cresset Press, 1962).

4. In the case of Burma, for example, Victor B. Lieberman and William J. Koenig, who both began academic careers in the 1970s, utilized Burmese and European source materials to provide the first comprehensive studies of early modern Burma up to the 1830s. Victor B. Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580–1760* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); idem, "Political Consolidation in Burma Under the Early Konbaung Dynasty, 1752–c. 1820," *Journal of Asian History* 30.2 (1996): 152–68; idem, "Local Integration and Eurasian Analogies: Structuring Southeast Asian History, c. 1350–c. 1830," *Modern Asian Studies* 27.3 (1993): 475–572; idem, "Ethnic Politics in Eighteenth-Century Burma," *Modern Asian Studies* 12.3

with few exceptions.⁵ Another group of scholars, largely influenced by anthropological theory, reconsidered the colonial legacy, but even then, scholarship focused on the ways in which colonial-era regimes, administrators, and scholars misunderstood or misrepresented "traditional" indigenous society. Understanding traditional indigenous society, whose social, cultural, and intellectual foundations were viewed as timeless and static, meant the study of the "standard" histories and the main political and religious institutions, whose original identification by nineteenth-century Western scholars was reified by indigenous scholars trained in colonial schools, as authentic representations of precolonial life.

More recently, some scholars such as Anthony Reid have drawn upon European accounts from the sixteenth century and after, as well as standard indigenous chronicles, to counterbalance the impact of colonial scholarship with a more nuanced approach. Reid suggests that cultural and religious transformations owed much to a dynamic interplay of international (although mainly maritime) trade fluctuations and local political change over the course of the early modern period.⁶ This scholarship, however, in looking broadly at external factors in Southeast Asian religious and cultural change ignored a range of internal developments, such as overland trade and domestic economic growth for example, that fed, over the longer term, more sustained political, cultural, linguistic, and religious transformations, an oversight only recently rectified in a groundbreaking study by Victor B. Lieberman.⁷

Not surprisingly, the scale of Reid's and Lieberman's work prevented a deeper investigation of the standard chronicles used as sources. This has been a special problem for the prevailing scholarship on Burma. Although

(1978): 455–82; William J. Koenig, *The Burmese Polity, 1752–1819: Politics, Administration, and Social Organization in the Early Konbaung Period* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1990).

5. For Burma, the main examples are Victor B. Lieberman, "A New Look at the Sasanavamsa," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39 (1976): 137–49 and idem, "How Reliable Is Ü Kala's Burmese Chronicle? Some New Comparisons," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 17 (1986): 236–55.

6. Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680*, vol. 1, *The Lands Below the Winds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); idem, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, vol. 2, *Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

7. Victor B. Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830*, vol. 1, *Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

closer examinations of history-writing in other areas of early modern Southeast Asia have been forthcoming,⁸ scholarship on Burma has generally, until very recently, failed to ask why some chronicles are available in printed form and others are not. Charles Hallisey has drawn attention to this problem regarding Buddhist texts in the context of Orientalist scholarship of the nineteenth century.⁹ In the case of Burma, only a very small fraction of indigenous chronicles and other indigenous sources have been made available in print not only to Western scholars, but also to the Burmese themselves.¹⁰ A small contingent of indigenous scholars who were educated in colonial schools, published in English, and worked closely with European scholars, were identified by the West as the chief indigenous authorities on Burmese history. This group of indigenous scholars played a crucial role, in turn, in identifying the texts that colonial-era Western scholars should study, and even provided them with frequently questionable, English-language abstracts or summaries of the indigenous sources.¹¹

Another body of indigenous scholars who were trained in monastic schools, wrote and published in Burmese, and did not work closely with Western historians examined a broader range of indigenous historical manuscripts (although they too viewed as primary, the authority of the standard chronicles) and were generally ignored by the West. A good example is the most important and prolific Burmese historian of the twentieth century, the "Hmawbi hsaya" Û Thein. On the few occasions when the main colonial-era academic journal, the *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, published his work, it was in non-Romanized Burmese. This fact seems to explain why Western scholars of the colonial period rarely cite him. With the gradual emergence of Burmese nationalism in the twentieth century, indigenous scholarship on the traditional chronicles became

8. William Cummings, *Making Blood White: Historical Transformations in Early Modern Makassar* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

9. Charles Hallisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravada Buddhism," in *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 51.

10. The problem of a limited number of properly edited print editions of Buddhist texts was also mentioned by Edward Conze in 1959. See the introductory comments to Lopez, *Curators of the Buddha*, 18.

11. A good example is that of San Shwe Bu, who "selected" for some of the major colonial historians extracts from the Western Burmese (Arakanese) chronicles. Although implied to be representative, these extracts in reality presented only San Shwe Bu's interpretations of local history.

increasingly politicized, presenting an obstacle to more critical approaches to these texts. From independence in 1948, indigenous scholars, like new generations of sympathetic Western scholars decades later, increasingly focused on the abuses of colonial historiography. In their effort to counter the latter, Burmese scholars, like Western scholars, still relied on the authority of the few widely available chronicles, accepting them at face value, almost giving them the same degree of undeniable authority regarding Burma's historical record that their monastic counterparts granted the texts of the Pali canon regarding Buddhist orthodoxy.¹² In this way, their perspectives paralleled what Hallisey calls the "metaphysics of origins" among Theravada Buddhists. As he explains:

This conception of tradition . . . provided the ideological context for the most common genres in Theravadin literature . . . all of which tended to claim authority and purpose from other texts, usually those known by the generic name "Pali." In this view, commentaries and translations were not the record of the growing understanding of a text . . . instead they were signposts for those in the present to recover accurately the meaning that had already been promulgated in the past. They were instrumentally valuable, but were without interest in their own right.¹³

Possibly, monastic approaches to texts influenced the methodology of indigenous historians in their own pursuit of historical truth. Indigenous historical scholarship, which actually encompasses a far greater number of people than the small numbers of professional historians that the Burmese state currently allows, continues to be characterized by the belief that histories of the precolonial past are valuable not so much by how they differ from the standard chronicles (the latter serving as a kind of litmus test for the accuracy of other local histories produced during the colonial period), but by how much they are in agreement. This helps to explain why many local histories of pagodas, monasteries, and towns consist mainly of compilations of extracts from the standard chronicles. Only recently, have scholars begun to look simultaneously at the roles of both indigenous and

12. A good example is that of the works of Maung Htin Aung, including his *A History of Burma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), but the most glaring example is a passionate, and somewhat blind, defense of the old Burmese chronicles in his *Burmese History Before 1287: A Defense of the Chronicles* (Oxford: Asia Society, 1970).

13. Hallisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken," 43.

colonial scholars in shaping the particular paradigms through which Burmese history is presently viewed.¹⁴

This select sampling of chronicles that made the transition to print thus granted undue authority to particular chronicles, which in turn helped make the focus of historiography extremely circumspect. Three main Burmese chronicles were selected for publication (and repeated republication) during the colonial period. These include the *Great Chronicle* (ca. 1730) compiled by Û Kalà with the interests of the court in mind, the *Glass Palace Chronicle* (1829–1831), compiled on the orders of the court, and the *Great Kôn-baung Chronicle* (ca. 1910), which incorporated the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, adding supplementary material to cover events up to the end of the dynasty. Thus, these chronicles focus on the court and convey its perspectives. They also share with other precolonial state projects attempts to legitimate the authority of the court and screen out other voices that might complicate the picture of a society and a cosmos kept in balance by the king. A myriad of other chronicles and histories from the precolonial period were available in manuscript form, but escaped colonial-era notice. Some of these were published after independence. Most, however, remain locked away in archives and libraries in Burma and in several locations in the West. Only a small number of Burmese scholars (Û Toe Hla, Û Thaw Kaung, the late Û Than Tun, and Û Tun Aung Chain being leading representatives of this group) and even fewer Western and Japanese scholars in the past decade or so have devoted the time and energy necessary to comprehend a broader picture of Burmese precolonial society than the standard chronicles would have us believe.¹⁵ Unfortunately, the prevailing

14. See, for example, Michael Aung-Thwin, *Myth & History in the Historiography of Early Burma: Paradigms, Primary Sources, and Prejudices* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1998); idem, *The Mists of Ramañña: The Legend That Was Lower Burma* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2005); and Michael W. Charney, "Centralizing Historical Tradition in Precolonial Burma: The Abhiraja/Dhajaraja Myth in Early Kôn-baung Historical Texts." *South East Asia Research* 10.2 (2002): 185–215.

15. Ryuji Okudaira, "Rekishiteki Haikai," in *Motto Shiritai Myanmar*, ed. Ayabe Tsuneo and Ishii Yoneo, 2nd ed. (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1994), 9–13 (this work was thankfully translated for the author by Atsuko Naono); idem, "Features of the Theravada Buddhist State Structure with Special Reference to the Muddha Beiktheik ('Supreme Coronation Ceremony') as Observed by King Badon in Eighteenth Century Myanmar" in *Proceedings of the Myanmar Two Millennia Conference 15–17 December 1999* (Yangon: Universities Historical Research Centre, 2000), 3.120–32; idem., "A Serious Problem Caused by Printing of a Burmese Manuscript—Richardson's Text of the

studies of Burmese literature in Western scholarship have tended to focus attention on the emergence of "modern" Burmese literature, usually dated to the early years of the colonial period, thus ignoring the full range of indigenous texts that preceded it.¹⁶

The failure of Reid and others to move beyond the small selection of premodern indigenous texts available in print and the static views of state and society these sources convey, and analyze indigenous social and cultural institutions as fluid, dynamic entities has helped to reinforce the essentialism of premodern Southeast Asian life. It should be no surprise then that the study of the "intellectual history" of Southeast Asian society has generally been limited to transitions emerging during the colonial period, a period in which the Western impact decisively "moved" Southeast Asians into a new, complicated world of thought, fed by new ideologies borrowed from the West. Among these transitions, the emergence of nationalism, even into the 1990s, has been viewed as the main intellectual event marking Southeast Asians' first steps into the modern world. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* is the quintessential example of this approach, identifying the nation as a modular package developed in Latin America, borrowed by Europe, and re-exported to Southeast Asian

Manugye Dhammathat or a Law Book." Paper presented at the Symposium in Honor of U Pe Maung Tin, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 11–13 September 1998; Ryuji Okudaira and Andrew Huxley, "A Burmese Tract on Kingship: Political Theory in the 1782 manuscript of Manugye," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 64.2 (2001): 248–59; most recently, Patrick Arthur Pranke has provided an excellent, critical analysis and translation of the *Vamsa Dipani*, a Burmese religious history, in "The 'Treatise on the Lineage of Elders' (Vamsadipani): Monastic Reform and the Writing of Buddhist History in Eighteenth-Century Burma" (PhD diss., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2004).

16. As Annemarie Esche explains: "In Myanmar the literature in the period up to the end of the nineteenth century consisted predominantly of translations, religious commentaries and poetry dealing with the nature of events at the royal court. The twentieth century brought a revolutionary change to Myanmar literature. It was not simply a reform of the old. The overwhelming majority of the old genres ceased to exist as organized entities, in form as well as in content . . ." Annemarie Esche, "Myanmar Prose Writing: Tradition and Innovation in the Twentieth Century," in *The Canon in Southeast Asian Literatures*, ed. David Smyth (London: Curzon, 2002), 8–20. Similarly, Anna J. Allott devotes only two full pages of text (spread over pp. 21–23) out of eighteen pages (not including notes) to pre-1870 Burmese literature in her "Continuity and Change in the Burmese Literary Canon," in *The Canon in Southeast Asian Literatures*, ed. David Smyth (London: Curzon, 2002), 21–40. The same disparity occurs in idem, "The Study of Burmese Literature—A General Survey," in *Southeast Asian Languages and Literatures*, ed. E. Ulrich Kratz (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), 7–56.

colonies, all through the media of print literature, where it was adopted by indigenous, anti-colonial movements.¹⁷ As we shall see, however, even before the era of mass publications, Burmese literati had realized the importance of texts in shaping proto-nationalist thought and developed conscious strategies to do so from the late eighteenth century. Indeed, control over texts—who wrote them, how they were written, and how they were circulated—became the central concern of the Burmese throne and the small clique of monastic and lay literati who came to dominate the court at that time.

This book examines major developments in the writing of history, religious practices, political theory, and self-representations in order to locate the critical changes in the ways in which the Burmese redefined themselves as they developed a modern cultural identity. These developments were initiated when two critical developments intersected in the late eighteenth century. The first development involved efforts by a frontier monastic community to defeat monastic rivals and win exclusive recognition by the court of their strict adherence to the Pali canon. Second, partly on its own initiative and partly due to its response to the first development, the Burmese throne added intellectual control to the approaches it adopted in attempting to centralize political authority in the kingdom. Both cooperated, and competed, to establish unquestioned authority over knowledge by using history and historiography to construct a national identity. Their success in these efforts was so thorough that although of very recent vintage, their intellectual reformulations were accepted by succeeding generations or scholars, indigenous and Western alike, as the "old knowledge," representing "traditional" Burma.¹⁸

No study has yet examined in depth the complex interaction of the literati and the throne in the context of the evolution of Kôn-baung state and society. Some scholars have usefully taken up this task for other areas of Southeast Asia. Craig J. Reynolds and David K. Wyatt have produced a number of studies of the production of historical texts and the collection of libraries in nineteenth-century Siam (Thailand). They identify a range of players involved in this process, some with counterparts in Kôn-baung

17. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

18. Thant Myint-U has indeed used the vocabulary of "old" and "new" knowledge as well, but the tensions between them are examined as only a small part of a wider range of developments in nineteenth-century Burma. See Thant-Myint U, *The Making of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Burma and some not.¹⁹ Alexander Woodside and Nola Cooke have done the same for Vietnam. Woodside's volume, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model* is a groundbreaking study of the ways in which the Nguyen elite confucianized their state culture to strengthen the dynasty.²⁰ Cooke has more recently challenged the confucianization model, demonstrating the heterogeneity of ideas among the Nguyen elite.²¹ New ways to interpret literati writings in the Malay world and Java have also been offered, most notably, in Henk Maier's approach to the Malay *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* and in Nancy K. Florida's examination of the prophetic writings of one member of the Javanese literati.²² Although outside of the field of Southeast Asian studies, Juan Cole's work on the importance of a small, regional group of Shi'i clerics in Awadh (Oudh) in northern India has

19. One group that was not particularly important in the social formation of knowledge in Burma consisted of the merchants and traders found in Wyatt's study. The early Bangkok court apparently encouraged free traders more than did the Kòn-baung court and trading was usually controlled by local court officers or comptrollers of royal monopolies. Wyatt cites this "bourgeois" element from Nidhi Aeuwsriwongse, whose work was not available to the author. For Wyatt's discussion of this and other groups, see David K. Wyatt, "History and Directionality in the Early Nineteenth-Century Tai World," in *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea, 1750-1900*, ed. Anthony Reid (London: MacMillan Press, 1997), 425-43. Other relevant work by Wyatt can be found in idem, "Chronicle Traditions in Thai Historiography," in *Southeast Asian History and Historiography: Essays Presented to D. G. E. Hall*, ed. C. D. Cowan and O. W. Wolters (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 107-22; and idem, "The Eighteenth Century in Southeast Asia," in *On the Eighteenth Century as a Category of Asian History*, ed. Leonard Blussé and Femme Gastra (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 39-55. Craig J. Reynolds' numerous contributions to the intellectual history of Siam are too numerous to list here, but especially useful for the present study was his PhD dissertation, "The Buddhist Monkhood in Nineteenth Century Thailand" (Cornell University, 1972).

20. Alexander B. Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Vietnamese and Chinese Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Council on East Asian Studies, 1988).

21. Nola Cooke, "The Myth of the Restoration: Dan-trong Influences in the Spiritual Life of the Early Nguyen Dynasty (1802-47)," in *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea, 1750-1900*, ed. Anthony Reid, 269-95 (Houndmills: MacMillan Press, 1997).

22. Hendrik M. J. Maier, *In the Center of Authority: The Malay Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1988); Nancy K. Florida, *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future: History as Prophecy in Colonial Java* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

demonstrated how small groups of learned men could make an important stamp on broader developments.²³ Likewise, C. A. Bayly's study of the interaction in India (and, to a lesser extent, Burma as well) between indigenous and colonial methods of data collection and retrieval, forming the "information order," has raised new questions not particularly directed at, but relevant to, the construction of knowledge by indigenous literati.²⁴ All of these works have made contributions that beg deeper interrogations of Kòn-baung intellectual contributions to Burmese state and society.

This book identifies two chief phases in which Burmese intellectual thought underwent significant transition prior to the arrival of colonialism and the Western impact. In the first phase, encompassing the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a small monastic community cooperated with the throne in asserting authority over indigenous texts and over a number of texts imported from other societies. At first these efforts were directed primarily at Pali canonical texts, but soon expanded to include a broader range of texts, including many which began to be identified as focusing on "worldly matters." Because of factional infighting among monks over interpretations of the Vinaya Code in the eighteenth century, the court set aside, as a special category of texts, those directly relevant to the *Sasana* (religion), Buddhist canonical and extra-canonical literature for which Pali texts would hold ultimate authority. Sanskrit texts, however, would generally hold authority in cases of disagreements over the information included in the second category of texts. These included Brahmanic court ritual texts, military manuals, calendrical works, and a range of other kinds of lay literature. Certainly, this category of texts would not have been perceived as secular in the word's modern sense. Nevertheless, the location of authority over certain kinds of knowledge in non-canonical texts represented a first, small step in that direction, one that made it easier for Burmese literati, of the 1830s especially, to discuss with Christian missionaries certain kinds of Western knowledge while simultaneously refusing to listen to the latter's anti-Buddhist, Christian rhetoric. Secularism in a modern sense would only emerge later during the colonial period, when colonial educational systems removed education from the

23. J. R. I. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

24. C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

hands of monks and placed it under the control of new, Westernized schools and curriculums.²⁵

The attempt to establish boundaries between different kinds of textual authority was something new and it was contested throughout the nineteenth century. We do not find in Burma the decentralized overlapping of numerous "knowledge-rich communities" that form the basis of what Bayly views as India's information order.²⁶ By contrast, the precolonial Burmese literati were much more far-reaching in the kinds of knowledge they sought to master and in the authority they asserted over texts. For the Burmese monk or layman afterward, the boundaries of knowledge were not socially proscribed, but were limitless. These boundaries expanded as the growth of the Burmese state incorporated ever-broadening fields of knowledge. Some of the literati explored in this book were simultaneously the leading historians, theologians, grammarians, legalists, linguists, and poets of their time, as well as masters of Sanskrit, Pali, and Burmese literature. The court did attempt to establish knowledge communities, especially in the case of Brahmins whose social sequestration oriented them more closely to the throne. Nevertheless, even here, the court failed, because the Brahmins did not have a monopoly on Sanskrit knowledge or texts, as they and the throne wrongly assumed. All important Burmese educated people, including the man who occupied the throne, emerged from and participated in a knowledge community that expanded the breadth of the social body. In the present book, "literati" is used to refer to this knowledge community. It was over this community that a group of Lower Chindwin monks sought to establish their hegemony, and thus promote themselves in the eyes of the court, by claiming authority over virtually all kinds of knowledge.

The reformation of Theravada Buddhist thought that occurred during the first phase discussed above was not unique to Burma. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Theravada Buddhism in a number of societies underwent a process of reformation involving, as one scholar has recently pointed out for Siam, "a radical shift in the interpretation of Buddhist Thought." Leading monks, with royal backing, reformed the monastic order, and emphasized "strict ritual, canonical fundamentalism, and

25. Donald K. Swearer, "Buddhism in Southeast Asia," in *Buddhism in Asian History*, ed. Joseph M. Kitagawa and Mark D. Cummings, 120 (New York: MacMillan, 1989); E. Michael Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma: A Study of Monastic Sectarianism and Leadership*, ed. John P. Ferguson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 157–61.

26. Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 5.

purity of ordination."²⁷ Sri Lanka and Burma experienced the same reformation, led by the monks of the Siam Nikaya in the case of Sri Lanka and the Sudhamma monks in the case of Burma, in both cases with royal support. Changes in Buddhist practices in Sri Lanka and in Theravada Buddhist Southeast Asia are frequently attributed to the impact of the West, particularly Christianity, in the nineteenth century.²⁸ Locating the critical period of change in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, however, means that Western political and cultural expansion cannot be viewed as a main causal factor. Probably more than any other factor, the rise of new dynasties in the eighteenth century after the collapse of their predecessors provided the possibilities for Buddhist reformation in the three Theravadin societies discussed here.²⁹ This created not only a need on the part of the new dynasties to shore up their political control and foster social stability necessary for that purpose, but also the opportunity, afforded by the dislocation of established monastic sects and networks of patronage, for new monastic sects to win royal recognition and support. Much of the prevailing literature for South and Southeast Asia has been preoccupied with the strategies of the throne in promoting religious reform and monastic participation viewed as a reaction to the former's initiatives.³⁰ Anne Blackburn, however, identifies the role of a particular monastic sect in promoting its teachings and using other strategies to win royal recognition as crucial to the reformation (or, in her words "reformulation") of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, offering a model with possible application to the emergence of new sects elsewhere in the Theravada Buddhist world in different periods.³¹ The present study attempts to demon-

27. Hallisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken," 48–49.

28. Anne Blackburn, *Buddhist Learning and Textual Practice in Eighteenth-Century Sri Lankan Monastic Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 5–6; Hallisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken," 47.

29. For the case of Siam, see John W. Butt, "Thai Kingship and Religious Reform (18th–19th Centuries)," in *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos, and Burma*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith, 34–51 (Chambersburg: Anima Books, 1978).

30. See for example, the study of religious change in Kandyan Sri Lanka in H. L. Seneviratne, "Religion and the Legitimacy of Power in the Kandyan Kingdom," in *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Sri Lanka*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith, 177–87 (Chambersburg: Anima Books, 1978).

31. Anne Blackburn, "Localizing Lineage: Importing Higher Ordination in Theravadin South and Southeast Asia," in *Constituting Communities: Theravada Buddhism and the Religious Cultures of South and Southeast Asia*, ed. John Clifford Holt, Jacob N. Kinnard, and Jonathan S. Walters, 140–43 (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003).

strate that a development similar to that discussed by Blackburn also provided the catalyst for change in Theravada Buddhist thought in Burma later in the eighteenth century, but also examines how this reformation affected other areas of Burmese intellectual thought, regarding history, myths of the state, and perceptions of ethnicity.

In the second phase, from the 1820s to 1885, the Burmese were exposed, to an unprecedented degree, to new ideas and technology emanating from the West. This new influence severely tested the "traditional," cosmological thought in the process of being codified by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century literati. The transmission of new technology and ideas from the West was only marginally felt before the 1820s. After Burma's defeat in the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824–1826), tensions emerged between the throne and the monastic and lay literati as they sought to maintain their authority in Burmese society. Much of this was due to the impact of what is referred to in the present study as the Burmese information revolution. Although Burma had experienced defeat at the hands of the British, the Western impact was brought not by European soldiers and colonial administrators, but by missionaries, a flood of Western print literature, and Burmese who were sent abroad to learn about the West. This meeting of two bodies of knowledge, the "old learning" established by the previous generation of rulers and literati and the "new learning" drawn from the West, forced the Burmese to make difficult choices about the role of literature, technology, and the state in their society. This tension produced in the late nineteenth century one of the most significant events in Burmese history, when a small group of literati borrowed political models from the "new learning" in a failed attempt to bring what they believed to be a backward-looking throne under their own control. In doing so, they provoked a series of events that led to the collapse of Burma's last dynasty, and the final extension of colonial control, in 1885.

This book also seeks to demonstrate the crucial relationship between regionalism and Burmese history. The prevailing historiography has ignored the influence of regionalism in Burmese political, religious, and intellectual history. This is mainly because a scattered population, organized into cells of royal service and free people, and equally dispersed monasteries encouraged the belief that intellectual exchange could only occur in the royal capital, where monks and lay literati were granted the patronage and exposure to intellectual cross-fertilization necessary for the development of trans-local perspectives. This view was consistent with the ubiquitous representations found in the indigenous sources and in art of

the royal center as the central mountain of Hindu-Buddhist cosmology (Mount Meru). Identifying intellectual currents that were developed on the periphery of the Burmese state and then exported to the throne challenges this perception. As mentioned, the primary catalyst for the intellectual developments examined in this book, from the 1780s, was the intersection of a monastic community that sought royal patronage and a king who sought their aid in securing his place on the throne. These forces, and the reasons for their intersection, were regional in nature.

King Bò-daw-hpayà, the monks he supported, and the leading literati and warriors who dominated his court from 1782 all came from, or were educated in, the Lower Chindwin River Valley, far from the royal capital. The "Lower Chindwin" refers to the region of Northwestern Burma that included the Lower Chindwin Valley and the immediate interior agricultural districts to the west and the east of this valley. It consisted of four governorships (*myó-ne*), Badon (Alon), Kani, Pán-kyi, and Amyin Nga-myó (the Amyin five towns), and towns and villages within them such as Maungdaung, Monywa, Monywè, Nga-ga-byin and Kyaukka, which were intimately connected through significant monastic, social, and cultural linkages.³² Badon, Monywa, and Monywè were the birthplaces of leading monks who rose to national prominence in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Further inland, farming communities at Nga-ga-byin and Kyaukka also contributed literati to the Kòn-baung intellectual world, and the former gave Kòn-baung Burma its two most famous military commanders: Maha Bandula I, who commanded Burmese forces in the First Anglo-Burmese War, and his younger brother, Maha Bandula II, who did the same in the Second Anglo-Burmese War. By far the most significant settlement, however, was the secluded village of Maungdaung, some sixty kilometers north of Budalin, about midway between the Chindwin and Mu rivers. As it was in the eighteenth century, Maungdaung village today remains very distant from the busy river ports of the Chindwin, Irrawaddy, and Mu rivers. Yet, monastic and lay literati from this and neighboring villages gave to Burma its major Kòn-baung era chronicles (the *Glass Palace Chronicle* and the *Great New Chronicle*, as well as two religious chronicles, the *Treatise on the Religion* and the *Lineage of the Religion*) and dominated the highest positions in the Kòn-baung era monastic

32. These four *myó-ne* (Badon, Kani, Pán-kyi, and Amyin Nga-myó) made up, along with Kyaukmyet, the Lower Chindwin District in colonial times. J. P. Hardiman, comp. *Burma Gazetteer: Lower Chindwin District*, vol. A (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1912), 153–54.

order. Evidence that the close correlation between shared regional roots and significant influence in the Burmese court from 1782 was not a mere coincidence is derived from a careful examination of the locations of intellectual production, monastic factional rivalry, and the major networks of patronage. Despite their regional affiliations, however, the importance of the Lower Chindwin monastic and lay literati to Burmese intellectual history has only been noted briefly here and there, usually in a sentence or two, in gazetteers, articles, and, surprisingly, only occasionally in the broader treatments of the Kòn-baung period. The present study seeks to demonstrate why this regional association is critical to understanding eighteenth and nineteenth century Burmese intellectual history.

Structure of the Book

Because the competition between the literati and the kingship for control of knowledge evolved over time, this book attempts as much as possible to balance its thematic coverage with a progressive narrative. Chapter 1 discusses the emergence of a particular monastic community in the Lower Chindwin region from the late seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, this monastic group joined in debates with other monks regarding interpretations of the Vinaya Code, providing opportunities for them to draw the court's attention to their particular monastic practices. These emphasized to an unprecedented degree, in the Burmese context, the relationship between textual authority and Buddhist orthodoxy. Because of their proximity to Manipur and routes to India, these monks were able to offer the court their talents in Sanskrit literature at a time when the throne sought in Indian texts the means of shoring up its legitimacy. Chapter 2 examines the demographic and social context of these monks and local lay literati with whom they associated and how a unique configuration of political and historical events brought them from the periphery to the upper levels of the Kòn-baung state. Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 examine the ways in which Lower Chindwin monastic and lay literati contributed to the strengthening of the Kòn-baung kingship and why they left such an important imprint on the thoughts and beliefs of late eighteenth century Burmese state and society. Their religious, political, and ethnic reformulations, however, led to tensions between the throne and this ambitious regional group. During this period, the throne ended up taming, however

briefly, the Lower Chindwin literati and used them to serve its own agenda.

Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 examine the changes in the relationship between the literati and the throne, in part due to the impact of a new field of knowledge, consisting of ideas and technology (including new information technology) from Europe. The throne attempted to bridge both worlds, those of "Indian" and "European" learning, but as difficulties emerged it turned back to the same formula of kingship developed by the Lower Chindwin literati in the period covered by chapters 3–6. A newer generation of scholars was more adept in adapting to the new political context—the increasing relevance of Europe in Burmese affairs during the last three decades of the dynasty. These scholars included writers, physicians, ministers, and monks who grew up in the 1820s and 1830s when the Burmese and Europeans were busy investigating each other's cultures, beliefs, and literature. To a significant extent, they were unconvinced by the old formulae of kingship and, ultimately, they turned against the one area of Burmese state and society the literati had not brought under their control by the 1870s, the throne itself. In this moment, the subjugation of the absolute throne to the needs of a sovereign population represented the birth of the Burmese nation.

The sources for the present study include royal chronicles (and other kinds of "history" texts), political manuals, biographical works, poetry, contemporary dictionaries and encyclopedias, newspapers, royal edicts, British administrative records, and European archival materials. For perspective and some valuable information not found elsewhere, the author's most enjoyable sources were current representatives of the Lower Chindwin literati, whom the author found in the corner tea shops and in monasteries during fieldwork in the Lower Chindwin at Alon (Badon), Monywa, and Maungdaung in March and April 2003, as well as other modern literati (and a horde of used book dealers on Pansodan Street) in Yangon, while living and researching in that city from December 2004 to May 2005.

chapter one



The Rise of a Regional Monastic Community

At the end of the eighteenth century, Shin Nyanabhivamsa, the king's chief of religious affairs (*thathanabaing*), dominated monastic and lay intellectual life in the Burmese kingdom with the support of the court. He played a central role in the generally successful Sudhamma Reformation, in which competing monastic factions and fraternities were integrated into a unified monastic order placed under the authority of a Sudhamma Council in the royal city.¹ The Sudhamma monks controlled monastic affairs into the middle of the nineteenth century, when divisions occurred again with the establishment of competing monastic sects (*nikaya*). Hence, from that time, the Sudhamma monks were referred to as a separate sect as well. The present chapter seeks to contribute a new, regional paradigm for understanding the roots of the Sudhamma Reformation, one that will, in later chapters, connect a small group of monks and lay affiliates in the Lower Chindwin to a broader range of intellectual developments that took place in Burma from the 1780s.

Previous examinations of the history of Burmese Buddhism have generally viewed religious reform in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as one dimension of state-sponsored projects aimed at the centralization of royal authority. Buddhist histories written in Burma during the period, with their focus on royal patronage and intervention in monastic disputes, do lend themselves to support such views. Further, many of the other themes they discuss, such as the rivalry between forest- and town-

1. The use of "reformation" here follows Patrick Arthur Pranke in the introduction to his "The Treatise of the Lineage of Elders." Pranke's romanization of Pali monastic titles, supplied originally in the texts examined here in Burmanized form, will be followed in general, with minor exceptions.

dwelling monks, disputes over monastic attire, and the importance of Pali literature to monastic study and production, so clearly indicate a coherent royal strategy of monastic control that scholars have been blinded to other historic themes and cultural agendas. On one level, Nyanabhivamsa's *Treatise on the Religion* does indeed present a history that justifies the religious reforms that resulted in the Sudhamma Reformation, for Nyanabhivamsa presided over this reformation in his role as the chief of religious affairs. A closer reading of this history, however, reveals that Nyanabhivamsa simultaneously intended to present a different history. Nyanabhivamsa, sometimes very subtly, constructs a vision of Burma's monastic history from the seventeenth century to his own time that connects the major events of this history to his own monastic lineage. In doing so, Nyanabhivamsa emphasizes certain elements of these events and of the monastic practices of his elders that unveil a new kind of approach to Burmese monasticism, one that had a regional subtext. When one considers the connections between monastic lineage, region, and practices referred to in Nyanabhivamsa's narrative, the *Treatise on the Religion* ceases to appear solely as a history of Buddhism in Burma. Instead, it becomes an explanation of why a particular community of monks from the Lower Chindwin succeeded with court support in bringing the kingdom's monastic order under their authority. This reading of Nyanabhivamsa's history goes far in explaining several important aspects of the Sudhamma Reformation that have eluded scholars until now. These include the king's appointment of a monk as junior as Nyanabhivamsa to the kingdom's most important ecclesiastical post, the zeal with which the Sudhamma Reformation was carried out after a century of equivocal responses by the court to appeals for royal intervention in monastic affairs, and the relationship between Nyanabhivamsa and the other rising talents from the Lower Chindwin.

The eventual success of Lower Chindwin monastic and lay literati in controlling the intellectual forces that shaped Burma in the late eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries depended upon the struggle of Nyanabhivamsa's monastic community. This group of monks had campaigned over the course of the eighteenth century to win court recognition of their monastic practices and succeeded in winning lay and royal support for their conspicuous displays of authoritative textualism regarding Pali and Sanskrit literature. This chapter examines the different dimensions of their approaches to monasticism, the challenges they faced, and why they ultimately secured royal support.

A Regional Paradigm

Nyanabhivamsa traces his own monastic lineage back to Shin Munindaghosa (1578–1650), otherwise known variously as Shin Tipitikalankara, Shin Tiriapabbatta, and the Taungpila monk. Munindaghosa had originally lived in a monastery in Prome, but when King Anauk-hpet-lun of Ava (r. 1606–1628) took the town in 1608, he brought Munindaghosa back with him.² There, Munindaghosa engaged in the study of Buddhist texts under the king's teacher, Shin Dhammananda. Upon Anauk-hpet-lun's death in 1638, Munindaghosa "took up the forest life,"³ although he kept his close connections with the royal court and, most importantly, royal patronage.

Munindaghosa's teachings soon spread throughout the Lower Chindwin (fig. 3) through his disciples. Nyanabhivamsa devotes careful attention to the geographic background of the elders of his lineage (fig. 4), whose concentration in the Lower Chindwin Valley suggests the importance of regional roots to his monastic community. A brief survey of the lineage, however tedious, is essential to understanding its geographic scope. Nyanabhivamsa includes among Munindaghosa's monastic pupils Shin Mahatissa, a native of Amyin, who studied in the Hsà-lin-gyi forest monastery, Shin Candabanya of Yemyein, Shin Gunasiri, also of Yemyein, and Shin Kalyanadhaja who lived and taught in various Lower Chindwin villages, including Badon, Maungdaung, and Nyaunggan. Kalyanadhaja's pupils included Shin Indobhasa, Shin Wimalasara, and Shin Kalyana-sakka in Nyaunggan, Shin Sandasara and Shin Gunasara of Maungdaung, Shin Warapissi of Badon, Shin Gunasiri of Kani, and Shin Dhammadhara (the Kato *hsayadaw*) who received instruction in Ta-naung and later lived and taught in the Pan-yin monastery near Badon. Gunasiri of Kani's disciples included Nyanabhivamsa himself, as well as Shin Dhammadara (mentioned above, having also been a pupil of Kalyanadhaja), Shin Dhammabinanda (the First Bagaya *hsayadaw*), and Shin Sudhammaransi (the Nyaunggan *hsayadaw*).⁴

Nyanabhivamsa also devotes attention to a second lineage of Lower

2. Maha-damà-thìn-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yá sa-dàn* (Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1956), 230.

3. Literally, "*daw win*" ("entered the forest") in one case and "moved to a forest monastery" ("*daw-ra-gyau-thó pyau-ng-nei*") in another. *Ibid.*, 230, 231.

4. Maha-damà-thìn-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yá sa-dàn*, 231; Tín Hswei, *Tha-thana-wuntha Dipani*, (Rangoon: Leidi Makkaing, 1974), 220.

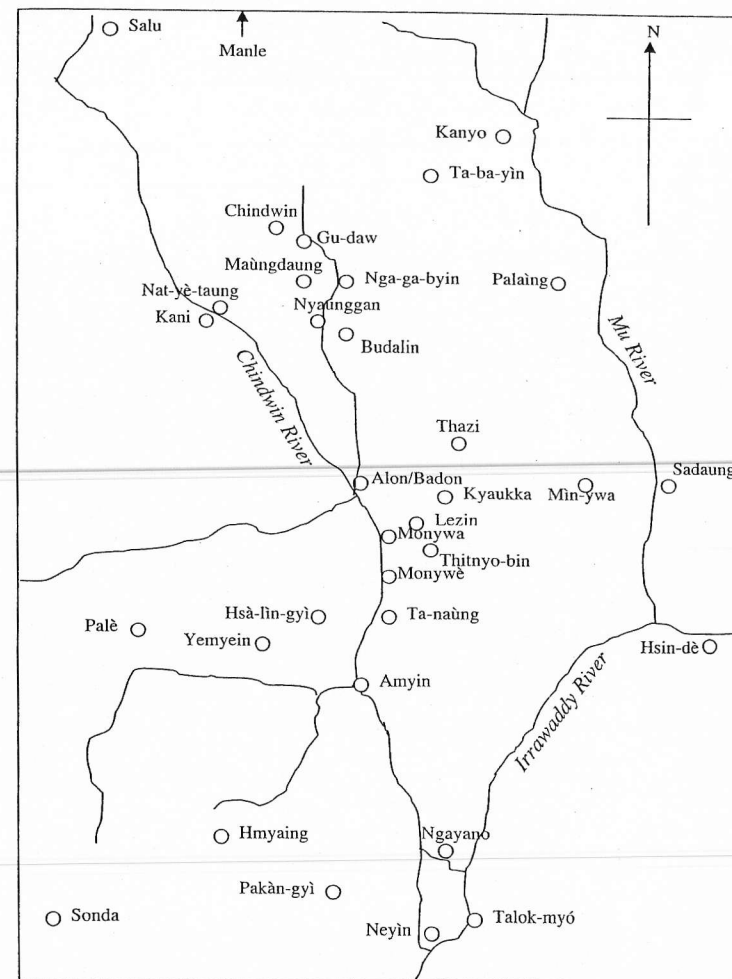


FIG. 3. Map of the Lower Chindwin

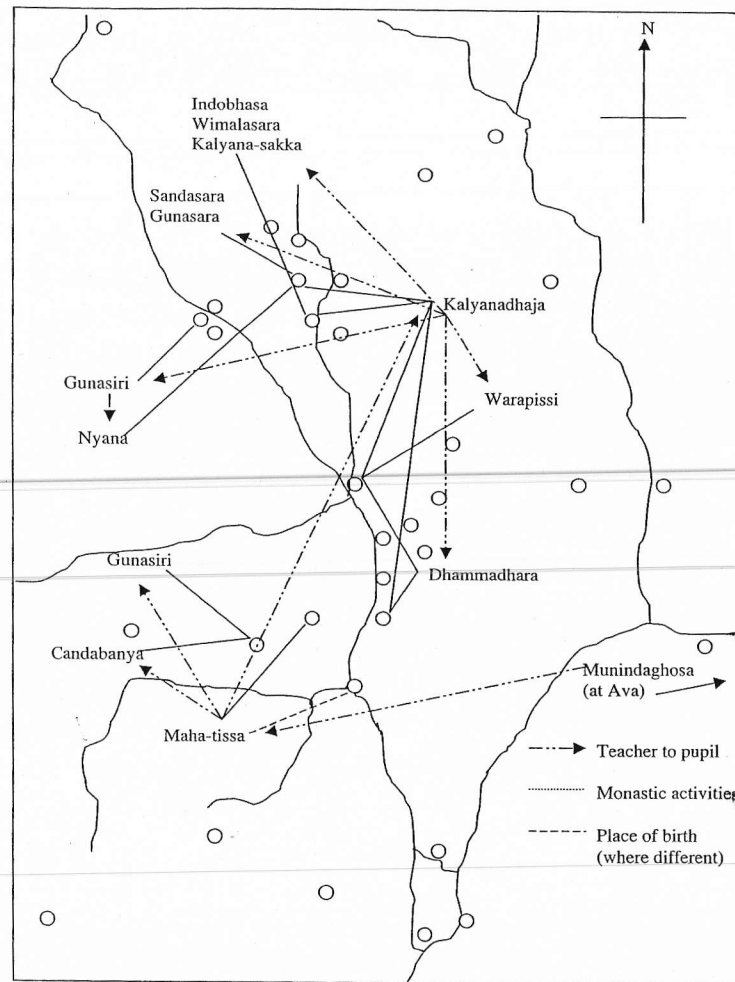


FIG. 4. Map Showing Shin Nyanabhivamsa's Monastic Lineage

Chindwin monks (fig. 5), that of Shin Aggadhammalankara, whom he closely associates with his own monastic elders and clearly views as members of the same monastic community. Aggadhammalankara's chief pupil, as explained by Nyanabhivamsa, was Shin Gunaganda who was a native of a village called, like the river that cut through the region, Chindwin. After Gunaganda received instruction in the canonical texts from Aggadhammalankara, he returned to the Lower Chindwin and began teaching his own pupils in villages near Badon. These pupils included Shin Sujata of the village of Palaing, who was one of the teachers of Maungdaung native Shin Gunasara who had also been a pupil of Kalyanadhaja, as mentioned above.⁵ Like the aforementioned Gunasiri, Sujata became one of the leading critics of the faction's monastic opponents in the mid-eighteenth century, and their shared experience during this dramatic episode appears to have been crucial to the maintenance of bonds holding Nyanabhivamsa's Lower Chindwin monastic community together during some of the troubled years ahead.

In his *Treatise on Monastic Lineage* (*Vamsa Dipani*),⁶ Shin Manimala, known as the Mei-hti *hsayadaw* and Nyanabhivamsa's ally in the 1790s reforms, provides supplementary information to Nyanabhivamsa's reference to another Lower Chindwin monastic lineage (fig. 6) beginning with Shin Kalyanadhaja of Ngayano. Shin Ariyalankara of Neyin, Shin Gunaratanasaka of Thitnyo-bin, Shin Saravamsa of Kyano, Shin Sirisettha of Salu, and Shin Gunalankara of Manle, all based in the Lower Chindwin, followed Kalyanadhaja.⁷ The last pupil in this line, as presented by Nyanabhivamsa, was Shin Nyanavara of Pakàn-gyl. Manimala presents him as the monk of Hsin-dè, outside of the region and closer to the royal capital, because King Alaùng-hpayà had dedicated to him "one hundred monasteries" that he had built in Hsin-dè.⁸ Although this promised to grant the Lower Chindwin monks an important place in the royal court from the beginning of the Kòn-baung Dynasty, this proved not to be the case, as the king shortly after adopted a "shameless monk," known as Shin Atula, as his chief of religious affairs instead.

5. Maha-damà-thìn-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yá sa-dàn*, 173.

6. A literal translation of *Vamsa Dipani* would be "Treatise on Lineage," but the intention behind the title is "Treatise on Monastic Lineage" (that is, of his own elders) as I have rendered it here. Pranke's rendering "Treatise on the Lineage of Elders," the first part of the title of his 2004 dissertation, is also suitable.

7. Mei-hti *hsayadaw*, *Vamsa Dipani* (Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1966), 141.

8. Maha-damà-thìn-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yá sa-dàn*, 184.

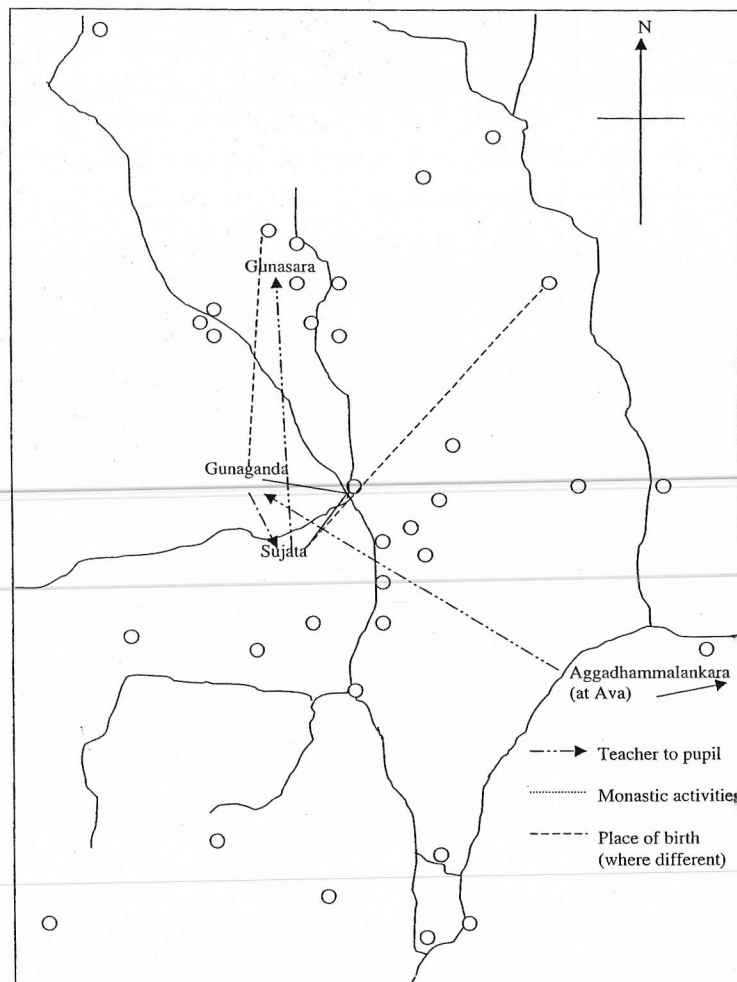


FIG. 5. Map Showing Shin Aggadhammalankara's Monastic Lineage

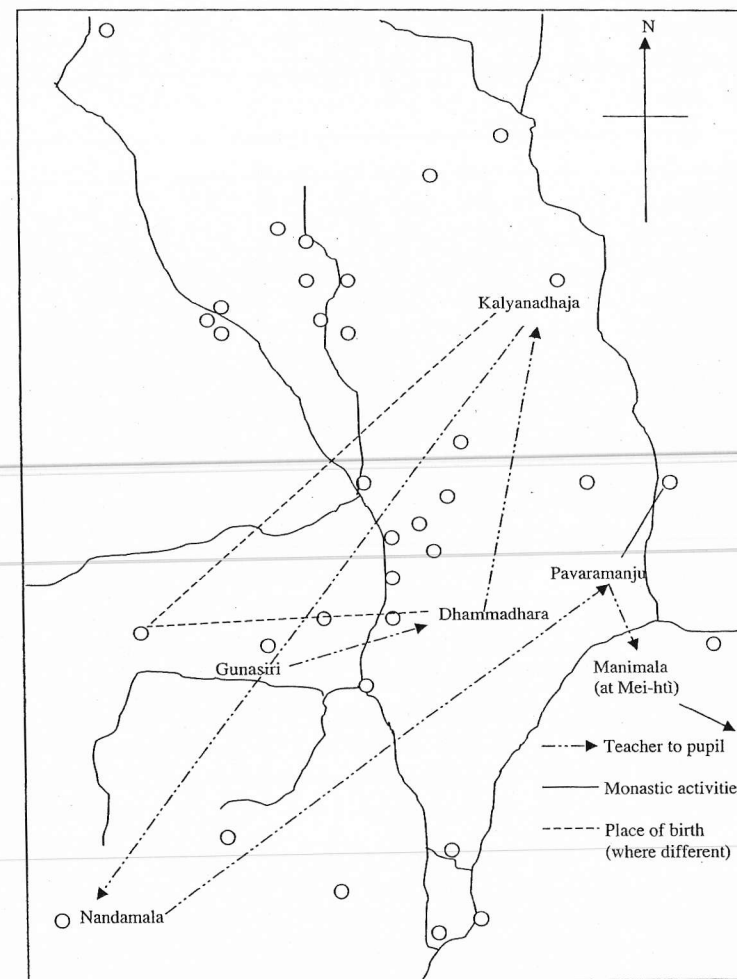


FIG. 6. Map Showing Shin Manimala's Monastic Lineage

Manimala adds a fourth branch to Nyanabhivamsa's lineage, stemming from Gunasiri of Yemyein. Although Manimala was both a native of Taung-ngu and a reform monk later sent back there, the line of teachers connecting him to Gunasiri were all Lower Chindwin monks. This included Gunasiri's pupil Dhammadhara, of Ta-naung, Dhammadhara's pupil Kalyanadhaja of Palaing, then Shin Nandamala of Sonda, followed by Shin Pavaramanju of Sadaung, and finally Pavaramanju's student Manimala.⁹ Manimala and Nyanabhivamsa disagree about the relationship between Kalyanadhaja and Dhammadhara, as the former claims that Dhammadhara was Kalyanadhaja's teacher and Nyanabhivamsa claims the reverse. Clearly over time, some traditions became confused. Shared references to Dhammadhara, Kalyanadhaja, and Gunasara, in each case included in two of the four monastic lineages mentioned above, indicate that these lineages were not clearly distinct, but rather reflected intimately interconnected networks of teachers and pupils. This is not surprising given their geographical overlap.

While a particular regional dimension of Nyanabhivamsa's monastic community can thus be inferred from these and other interconnected monastic lineages centered on the region, as well as from the administrative and ecclesiastical appointments they dominated, it was the shared textual practices of these monks that clearly separated them from their predecessors and rivals. In his history, Nyanabhivamsa frequently deploys his elders in different contexts that explain their teachings and illustrate their adherence to the Pali canon by juxtaposing both elders and teachings with their binary opposites. These episodes include confrontations between *aranyavasi* (forest dwelling) and *gamavasi* (town dwelling) monks,¹⁰ monks who are "covered" (Ayoune), that is wearing the upper robe over both shoulders, and the *Atins*, who draped their upper robe over only one shoulder, and monks who strictly adhere to the Vinaya, especially those with a strong command of Pali canonical and extra-canonical texts, and those who rely on the traditions passed down by their teachers. Nyanabhivamsa also hints at a special methodology applied by his elders to winning royal support, including their displays of textual erudition and memorization before the court.

Nyanabhivamsa interweaves this narrative with a royal one that pro-

9. Mei-hti *hsayadaw*, *Vamsa Dipani*, 142.

10. Irrawaddy River Valley texts, as opposed to those from Western Burma, frequently use the Burmese *daw-ra* instead of the Pali *aranyavasi* to denote forest-dwelling monks. I use the latter for simplicity in this discussion.

vides both a chronological structure and a courtly context. In doing so, he connects his elders' failures to misguided kings and his elders' successes to good rulers. This helps to explain why Nyanabhivamsa was unable to reconcile in his narrative his fall from grace during the 1810s brought about by the same king who had granted Nyanabhivamsa's monks their most important moment of authority over the Religion in the kingdom. Nyanabhivamsa thus covers only the period of Bò-daw-hpayà's reign when he was still in royal favor, skipping the entire period after he was defrocked.

The closest parallel to the emergence of these monks is the emergence of the Siam Nikaya in Sri Lanka, as discussed by Blackburn. Although the Siam Nikaya was only established in 1753, with the new ordination imported from Siam, its monks had undergone a process of redefinition far earlier and had already established strategies for winning royal patronage. Among these strategies, their stress on authoritative textuality was unprecedented on the island and they used this authority to argue that their predecessors and monastic rivals were incorrect in their understanding of the Vinaya. Blackburn thus challenges the notion of a reformation of traditional Sri Lankan Buddhism after the decline of monasticism on the island in the seventeenth century. She argues instead that the Siam Nikaya monks offered a new approach to Buddhism that is better seen as a reformulation.¹¹

In Burma, Nyanabhivamsa and his associates wrote the major Buddhist histories of this period after the Sudhamma Reformation was firmly in place. By that time, the monastic factions, including monastic fraternities that had been allied with Nyanabhivamsa and his elders, had been unified under one head. Those who accepted the new teachings now formed a powerful monastic majority who became known as the Sudhamma monks, so called after the Sudhamma Pavilion used for reordination.¹² In their historical treatment, there was only one body of Theravadins, their own, and their opponents, who are regarded as non-Theravadins. The description of factional opponents is limited to epithets, with Nyanabhivamsa presenting his elders as members of the correct group in each case. As all recognized monks had become Sudhamma monks by the time that they wrote, Nyanabhivamsa and the other authors of the Buddhist histories discussed here do not generally provide a single term to refer to

11. Blackburn, *Buddhist Learning and Textual Practice*, 10.

12. Pranke, "The 'Treatise on the Lineage of Elders,'" 1. The use of "pavilion" in the present text follows Pranke, for Manimala does not actually mention whether he refers to a hall or pavilion.

the distinct monastic community of which Nyanabhivamsa had been a part before the reformation. By necessity, Sudhamma will be adopted in the present study as a retroactive reference to Nyanabhivamsa's textual community prior to the reformation. Certainly, Sudhamma monastic activities, from 1788, were much broader in geographic scope than those of Nyanabhivamsa's monastic community before that time, and to refer to the latter as Sudhamma monks does not completely convey the limited regional dimension of their origins and activities. Nonetheless, since Nyanabhivamsa and his community of monastic elders established, led, and defined the practices of the Sudhamma Reformation monks, applying to them the term Sudhamma does accurately convey the continuity of monastic practices and leadership. For convenience, this term will be used to refer to members of Nyanabhivamsa's Lower Chindwin monastic community and to those monks who accepted the teachings and leadership of this monastic community from 1788.

The Aranyavasi Path

The eighteenth and nineteenth century Buddhist histories from both Western Burma and the Irrawaddy Valley share with the histories of the Sri Lankan Siam Nikaya a significant effort to associate the monastic groups that produced them with the *aranyavasi* monks who played important roles centuries earlier in major episodes of monastic reform. Blackburn argues that in the Sri Lankan case, connections "forged" between textual and ritual practices of these earlier generations of reformist *aranyavasi* monks and those of the Siam Nikaya helped the latter to mask the innovative nature of their own monastic practices and grant them "an element of borrowed authority as reformist monks."¹³ The fact that the Sudhamma monks in the Irrawaddy Valley did so at roughly the same time as the Siam Nikaya in Sri Lanka suggests that these approaches to self-presentation by monastic reformers might be more properly viewed within a broader, trans-regional context of monastic reform, Buddhist history writing, and a new and intensified emphasis on *aranyavasi* practices throughout the Theravada Buddhist world. The circulation of monks in search of new teachings between Sri Lanka and Western Burma, the Irrawaddy Valley,

13. Blackburn, "Localizing Lineage," 136.

and Siam during the eighteenth century may have played a crucial role in this process.

Throughout the eighteenth century, Nyanabhivamsa's *aranyavasi* elders, like Munindaghosa, emphasized their superior cultivation of meditative practices, assured by seclusion from worldly matters. *Aranyavasi* monks sought escape from urban centers and the domain of everyday human life. Significant forestland, low population concentrations, and an atmosphere of life on the periphery in the Lower Chindwin were ideal settings for the ascetic orientations of *aranyavasi* monasticism. The *Vinaya* stipulates that all monks should spend some portion of their monastic life in retreat where they can cultivate meditative practices. *Aranyavasi* monks sought more completely to isolate themselves from the temptations of the material world by going into the forests, hence the terminology "forest-dwellers."¹⁴ There, such monks would cultivate meditative practices and would write commentaries on Buddhist texts. Although some *aranyavasi* monks lived up to this ideal, many forest-dwelling monks did not go too far from populated areas, living in monasteries built on the fringes of towns and villages.¹⁵

Generally, *gamavasi* monks consisted of those monks who, unlike the *aranyavasi* monks, lived within the towns and villages and engaged in significant interaction with the lay population. The Burmese Buddhist histories discussed in this chapter adopt *gamavasi* as a broad category that includes any monk who was not an *aranyavasi* monk, despite frequent indications that they were subject to considerable variation in their adherence to the *Vinaya*. Nyanabhivamsa more specifically applies *gamavasi* to characterize monks who took the wrong side in the episodic factional disputes that involved his own elders. Nyanabhivamsa also indicates in several cases that "good" monks who started out as *gamavasi* monks, such as Munindaghosa himself, eventually found the correct path and became *aranyavasi* monks.

14. Than Tun, *Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma* by Professor Than Tun, ed. Paul Strachan (Whiting Bay, Scotland: Kiscadale Publications, 1988), 85.

15. The Burmese royal orders typically prescribed a specific distance. Professor Victor Lieberman, personal communication, January 1999. In the case of the Zeta-wun monastery in the early seventeenth century, the prescribed distance was five hundred *ta* (roughly two thousand cubits). The monastery was thus built that distance to the east of the royal city. See "Rakhine Min-ra-za-gri Aei-daw sa-dan," MS 1632, AMS, 1784 [1775], National Library, Ministry of Culture, Yangon, Union of Myanmar, f. 33a.

Among the *gamavasi* monks were the hat-wearing monks known as *pwe-gyaung-gamavasi* monks, whom Manimala claims to have followed practices originally introduced into Lower Burma during the brief period of Portuguese rule in the early sixteenth century, when undisciplined and corrupt monks came from Sri Lanka to Syriam.¹⁶ Western Burmese histories compiled in the early sixteenth century also describe such monks, using the same terminology, but attribute their emergence to a much earlier period of Buddhist history. According to some scholars, *pwe-gyaung* monks could still be found well into the nineteenth century, throughout the reign of King Pagan (1846–1853) and possibly even into the reign of Mindon.¹⁷ According to Bò-daw-hpayà, in one of his royal edicts issued in 1813, these monks wore hats and engaged in numerous “corrupt” activities including fortune telling, tattooing, boat racing, wrestling, drum beating, fire beating, and the handling of corpses. Writing in the early twentieth century, Tin, who made use of the edicts as well as both Irrawaddy Valley and Western Burmese histories, claimed that *pwe-gyaung* monks pursued numerous kinds of knowledge that a pupil could use to earn a living (*athek-mwei*) in the lay world.¹⁸ In addition to teaching pupils to read and write, *pwe-gyaung* schools offered instruction in various, and not necessarily theological, intellectual topics. First, they taught high arts, such as how to write various kinds of verse, music, and dancing, at least partly to secure a livelihood for skilled pupils outside of the monastery, as well as specialized sciences, including astrology, medicine, and massage. *Pwe-gyaung* monks also trained pupils in various martial arts, including the use of swords, crossbows, longbows, pellet slings, and shields. Finally, these monasteries taught practical arts, including handicrafts.¹⁹ Other sources repeat these descriptions and call such monasteries *pwe-gyaung* because the monks living in them intermingled with common people at festivals (*pwe*). A careful examination of the evidence, however, suggests that far from a clear monastic category, *pwe-gyaung* was used by *aranyavasi* monks as a device in Buddhist histories and royal orders, all taken at face value

16. Mei-hti hsayadaw, *Vamsa Dipani*, 126.

17. John Alexander Stewart, *Buddhism in Burma* (London: University of London, 1949), 6.

18. Royal Order, 23 July 1813, in Than Tun, ed. *The Royal Orders of Burma, A. D. 1598–1885* (Kyoto: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1984–1990): 7.311 (henceforth, all royal orders cited in this book will refer to the date, volume, and page numbers in this collection); Û Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1933): 5.211.

19. Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 4.193.

later by Tin, to denigrate monks of whom the authors disapproved, in order to justify monastic reform. The charges laid against such monks, as discussed above, focus on their involvement with activities that deviated from the study of canonical and other Buddhist texts and meditation.

The Buddhist histories produced in Burma during this period describe the origin of the division between *aranyavasi* and *gamavasi* monks in cyclic terms. Recurring episodes of division and re-coalescence are used to demonstrate early proof of the dangers of allowing *gamavasi* monks to dominate the monastic order. Among Burmese monastic histories, those of Western Burma (dominated by the small Burmese-speaking state known as Arakan, which remained politically separate from the Irrawaddy Valley until 1784) push their narrative furthest back in time and locate the roots of the *gamavasi* and *aranyavasi* divide in Western Burma to the third decade after the Buddha’s attainment of Enlightenment.²⁰ In his *Treatise on the Religion*, Nyanabhivamsa traces this division to later centuries and views *gamavasi* monks as members of the notorious non-Theravadin Ari priests who were purged by Anaw-rahta’s prelate Shin Arahan in the eleventh century. References to such early episodes helped Nyanabhivamsa and other monastic writers demonstrate the purity of *aranyavasi* practices, thus encouraging the reader to regard them more favorably in later contexts. Like his Sri Lankan counterparts, Nyanabhivamsa devotes considerable attention to important *aranyavasi* monks of the fourteenth century whose reforms targeted *gamavasi* corruption. As Nyanabhivamsa explains, in the fourteenth century, King Uzana of Ava (Pinya) built and dedicated seven monasteries, along with land and villagers to support them, to seven monastic elders of noted discipline. For some time, Theravada Buddhism flourished in Myinsaing and Pinya and, as time passed, the numbers of monks in these monasteries grew into the thousands, even tens of thousands. Many monks deficient in the moral precepts were among them, whom Nyanabhivamsa identifies as *gamavasi* monks. As these monks became burdened “with revenue collections and the increase in other administrative responsibilities” on their monastic *glebe* lands or estates, “they no longer wished to study . . . the Pali texts.”²¹ Ultimately, two monks who found the decline in the study of canonical literature and engagement in mundane economic pursuits by monks unseemly fled to the forests to begin a purer form of monasticism. Nyanabhivamsa views

20. “Rakhine Min-ra-za-grì Arel-daw sa-dàn,” f. 5a.

21. Maha-damà-thìn-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yá sa-dàn*, 126–27.

this event as a major point of monastic divergence, for, from this time, Irrawaddy Valley monks permanently divided into the *gamavasi* monks who remained in town and village monastic establishments and the *aranyavasi* monks who lived, studied, and meditated in forest monasteries.²²

Nyanabhivamsa was specifically concerned about the rivalry between his own monastic community and encroaching *gamavasi* monks in the Lower Chindwin.²³ Generally, *aranyavasi* complaints about *gamavasi* monks were rooted in competition over economic resources, for they were competitors, to different degrees, for royal patronage. Nevertheless, there may have been additional local pressures that encouraged Lower Chindwin *aranyavasi* monks to disparage town-dwelling monks. The Lower Chindwin Valley was a difficult place in which to compete for lay patronage. Low rainfall made it one of Burma's driest areas. Even during the colonial period with innovations in water control, the Lower Chindwin Valley remained continually on the verge of drought. The harshness of the Chindwin environment and its relatively low population base may have dissuaded all but the hardest monks. The demographic base was not only weaker, but also, if meager agricultural reserves are any indication, poorer in the Chindwin Valley than in other areas of Upper Burma. Oral traditions in the Lower Chindwin hold that many monks resettled in the area during the 1740–1757 civil war, because this area was relatively peaceful while there was warfare everywhere else.²⁴ As indicated in Nyanabhivamsa's history, *aranyavasi* complaints about *gamavasi* monks increased from the mid-eighteenth century. An increasing lay population and growing numbers of *gamavasi* monks among them from the 1740s seem to have encroached upon *aranyavasi* monasteries in the Lower Chindwin, forcing them to move further away. According to local traditions, relatively sparse human settlement in the Lower Chindwin region originally made it the

22. Ibid., 127.

23. We know this because royal involvement in this controversy is stressed in the Maha-zei-yá-thein-hka text ("Rakhine Mìn-ra-za-grì Arei-daw sa-dàn"). Although the text stresses that the controversy was an old one and played a pivotal role in conflicts between Vesali and early post-Vesali Arakan and Irrawaddy Valley kingdoms, we have no evidence to verify it, and this may be an anachronistic rendering of the controversy to stress the longevity of the debate within the Western Burmese context. This was also true in the Irrawaddy Valley. In nineteenth-century Burma, for example, *gamavasi* monks urged villagers to burn *aranyavasi* texts and physically assault *aranyavasi* monks. Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 59.

24. Local informants interviewed in Monywa in April 2003.

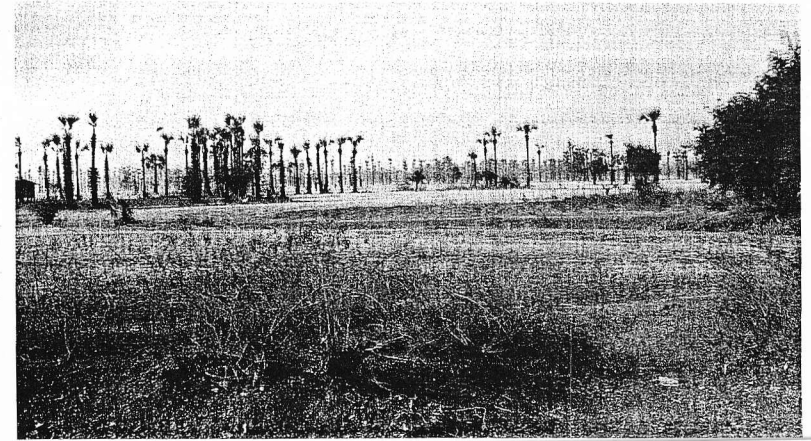


Fig. 7. The Lower Chindwin Landscape

home of numerous forest monasteries. As towns and villages expanded, the number of forest monasteries declined. Later, in the twentieth century, even Nyanabhivamsa's original forest monastery in rural Maungdaung converted into a *gamavasi* monastery.

Competition between *gamavasi* and *aranyavasi* monks reached fever pitch during the latter years of King Maha-damá-ya-za-dí-patí's reign (r. 1733–1752), which witnessed some of the most desperate fighting along the Irrawaddy River during the civil war of 1740–1757. The problem emerged when a seemingly hotheaded monk, the *hsayadaw* of the Nyaung-sin-shwe monastery, emerged as a leader among the *gamavasi* monks. Using the *aranyavasi* practice of not wearing headdresses as a rallying cry, he sought to initiate his own, apparently violent, purge of the monastic order independently of the royal court. First, he ordered *gamavasi* followers to destroy *aranyavasi* religious edifices. He then targeted a forest monastery of about fifty *aranyavasi* monks located to the southeast of the village of Hsin-dè and led his monks to expel them. Maha-damá-ya-za-dí-patí belatedly put a stop to the violence, reflecting again the hesitance of the Restored Taung-ngu dynastic rulers to interfere in monastic affairs. Apparently, Maha-damá-ya-za-dí-patí merely admonished the guilty

monks rather than defrock them, and commanded the *aranyavasi* and *gamavasi* monks to live in peace, each following their own practices.²⁵

Gamavasi animosity toward *aranyavasi* monks may have been due in part to the latter's advantages in gaining court support. *Aranyavasi* monks offered several benefits for central authority. As monks who, at least ideally, lived in distant isolation from the lay community, *aranyavasi* monks could make an easier case for themselves than could the *gamavasi* monks as being immune from corrupting influences. Rulers concerned about monastic intervention in royal affairs may also have harbored notions that the more "worldly" an order became, the more land and power it accumulated and the more it "thereby . . . interfere[d] in politics,"²⁶ thus making support for *aranyavasi* monks as opposed to *gamavasi* monks very attractive. These impressions of *aranyavasi* monks, however, were likely more apparent than real. Despite the *aranyavasi* monks' disavowal of materialism, for example, Than Tun suggests that some forest-dwelling monastic establishments in the Irrawaddy Valley accumulated considerable wealth, property, and influence in the late Pagan and Avan kingdoms. Nevertheless, according to Than Tun, *aranyavasi* monks could offer additional agricultural and economic benefits to Irrawaddy kingdoms. As forest-dwellers, the *aranyavasi* monks often opened up new lands (although with increasing wealth, they began purchasing land as well). *Aranyavasi* monastic institutions funneled some of the produce from their estates into the domestic economy through lay officials hired by the monastery to conduct their business.²⁷ Why *aranyavasi* monks had difficulty in winning royal support in the late seventeenth century and for substantial parts of the eighteenth century might be partially explained by the fact that in establishing a very strict and clear measure of their monastic practices, especially by their isolation from the lay community, they made it easier for opponents to demonstrate deviations from the forest-dwelling path.

The Robe Controversy

More than lineage, regional connections and forest-dwelling practices encouraged unity among the monks who made up Nyanabhivamsa's monastic community. They also shared, in another context, allegiance to the Ayoun (covered) faction in a debate that endured over the course of

25. Maha-damā-thin-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yā sa-dān*, 182.

26. Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 64.

27. Than Tun, *Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma*, 86–87, 94–95, 100.

the eighteenth century over the proper manner in which to wear monastic clothing. As Mohan Wijayaratna points out, clothing serves as one of the most important monastic symbols, its uniformity stressing equality among monks and lack of conspicuous decoration symbolizing detachment from worldly materialism, while simultaneously distinguishing them from other ascetics. The Vinaya pays close attention to how a monk wears his clothing and includes detailed rules concerning monastic dress, these rules being more numerous than those for either food or lodging. It is thus not surprising then that eighteenth century Burmese monks considered proper monastic attire as crucial to strict adherence to Vinaya precepts. A monk's clothing consisted of three robes, one to be worn as a cloak when necessary, an upper robe to be worn as an outer garment, and one to be worn as underclothing.²⁸

Different interpretations of the Vinaya regarding monastic clothing emerged at the end of the seventeenth century as a major point of contention between rival monastic factions. On different occasions, monks of one party or the other brought the matter to the court in order to win its recognition of their own strict adherence to the Vinaya. The main issue was the question of how novices should wear their upper robe when entering a village (or town). The Ayouns argued that the upper robe should be draped over both shoulders and the Atins held that it was only necessary to drape the upper robe over one shoulder. At the root of the conflict was a debate over the role of the canonical texts in prescribing certain monastic practices. While the Ayouns stressed that their position was supported by the core texts of the Pali canon, the Atins were said to have derived their practices from a controversial twelfth-century text entitled *Sula-gandi* (*Culagunthipabba*) and the teachings established by Shin Su-dama-sari, who had gone to Sri Lanka for monastic instruction.²⁹

28. Mohan Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life According to the Texts of the Theravada Tradition*, tr. Claude Grangier and Steven Collins, with an introduction by Steven Collins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 32–37, 40–42.

29. Maha-damā-thin-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yā sa-dān*, 181–83; Pranke, "The 'Treatise on the Lineage of Elders,'" 3. Paññasami or the translator of his Pali text has erred in suggesting that it was *gamavasi* monks who destroyed the book. Paññasami rearranged some of Nyanabhivamsa's paragraphs making it appear that it was *gamavasi* monks who reacted by destroying the book. In fact, Nyanabhivamsa refers to these *gamavasi* monks destroying *aranyavasi* religious edifices, not "the book of the monks who had been forest dwellers." Instead, Nyanabhivamsa clearly explains that it was the Taungbilu *hsaya-daw* and the Ayouns who destroyed the book, the title of which is not provided. Shin Paññasami, [*Sasanavamsa*] *The History of Buddha's Religion*, tr. Bimala Churn Law (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1986), 124–25.

The long duration of the shoulder controversy was due primarily to the hesitancy of the throne to become involved in such disputes to any significant degree. Two of the last three kings of the Restored Taung-ngu Dynasty, Sanei (r. 1698–1714) and Tanin-ganwei (r. 1714–33), both refused to purge the monastic order of either of these two factions.³⁰ Tanin-ganwei, who favoured the Atin monks, responded to Ayoun requests for royal intercession in the dispute by appointing four unsympathetic *gamavasi* monks as *Vinaya* judges in the case, who ruled in favor of their own faction. Despite royal favor of the Atins, the throne's efforts to enforce a conclusion to the dispute appear to have had little impact. According to the available sources, Maha-damá-ya-za-dī-patī later decided to put an end to the Atin-Ayoun dispute and sponsored a debate between the two factions. Again, however, the court was hesitant to enforce a ruling and the problem was not resolved.³¹

Theoretically, Burmese kings had the obligation to maintain monastic unity and correct practices among monks as one aspect of their role as protectors of the Religion and their responsibility of guaranteeing its survival for the five thousand years of the present dispensation. The king would first identify a monk who strictly adhered to monastic practices as outlined in the *Vinaya* Code and under his authority have the monks interrogated and the "corrupt" monks defrocked. Outside of the royal city and areas close to the royal center, however, such royal edicts may have had no effect at all, save for a decline in royal patronage, explaining the long duration of factional infighting. Moreover, kings intent on defrocking monks could only do so at considerable risk. Especially influential and wealthy monastic establishments sometimes had substantial lay support and the wealth necessary to circumvent or to pressure royal authority when the monastic establishments perceived a threat to their interests. Monastic purges could easily alienate the noble patrons of the monks involved and, given the political particularism of early modern Burma, this was not a consequence without danger to the king and to the stability of the kingdom. Monastic establishments were powerful entities that combined the interests not only of the monks themselves, but also of those who patronized the monasteries and the monks. Burmese kings had the right to intervene, but only in

30. Maha-damá-thin-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yá sa-dàn*, 181; Atin practices at this time were initiated by Gunabhilamkara, who lived in the village of Tunna (on the western side of the Sallavati River). The monks in Tunna who followed his teachings became known as the Tunna fraternity. Paññāsami, *Sasanavamsa*, 123.

31. Maha-damá-thin-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yá sa-dàn*, 182–84.

extreme cases did they do so. Thus, although Alaung-hpayà (r. 1752–1760), the founder of the Kòn-baung Dynasty, decided in favor of the Atins, he made little or no effort to enforce the decision outside of the royal capital. Such indecisiveness would characterize royal reform efforts until the early 1780s.

Even so, the early Sudhamma monks benefited from the court's continuing involvement in the robe controversy and its increasing favor of the Ayoun faction. Because of this controversy, King Singu (r. 1776–1782) initially made Shin Gunalankara of Manle, a Lower Chindwin monk, his chief of monastic affairs, although he then replaced him with Shin Nandamala from the Lower Chindwin village of Sonda.³² The representatives of the Ayoun monks whom Singu called before the court for a debate concerning the robe controversy, as discussed below, included seven monks, at least four of whom were Lower Chindwin monks, including Nandamala, Shin Gunasiri of Min-O (near Kani), Gunalankara of Manle, and Shin Nyana of Pakàn-gyi.³³ Growing intimacy between the court and the Lower Chindwin monks would later encourage an important place for the Sudhamma monks in the early years of Bò-daw-hpayà's reign as well as Nyanabhivamsa's emergence as the chief of monastic affairs in 1788.

During the early years of Singu's reign, Nandamala became an outspoken leader of the Ayoun faction and, using the canonical literature as his proof, admonished his pupils not to practice the throne-supported Atin practice of wearing the upper robe on one shoulder only when entering villages. Nandamala also wrote a book defending his position, which a party of Atin monks brought to the king's attention, presumably to demonstrate the heresy of Nandamala's teachings. Singu summoned both Nandamala and the Atin monks and had them debate the issue before him. Nandamala argued that the Atin practice was not to be found in the main books of the Pali canon, the commentaries, or subcommentaries. Unable to explain from whence the practice came, the Atin monks attributed it to traditions passed down from teacher to pupil. Nyanabhivamsa's narrative goes no further regarding this episode, for he had made his point: monas-

32. Regarding Nandamala, Manimala calls him Shin Nandamala of Sonda and Nyanabhivamsa agrees that he was a native of the Lower Chindwin region. Nyanabhivamsa also explains, however, that by that time, Nandamala resided in a monastery in Hsalin-myó, further down the Irrawaddy River. Mei-hti *hsayadaw*, *Vamsa Dipani*, 147; Maha-damá-thin-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yá sa-dàn*, 189.

33. Mei-hti *hsayadaw*, *Vamsa Dipani*, 147; Maha-damá-thin-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yá sa-dàn*, 188–89.

tic practices had to be based on a careful study and understanding of the canonical texts.³⁴ Nevertheless, Singu's edict in favour of the Ayoun monks could have little impact without a royal commitment (or ability) to effectively enforce monastic reform. This would change several years later with the beginning of Bò-daw-hpayà's reign.

The histories written by Nyanabhivamsa and Manimala, as Sudhamma monks of different but interconnected monastic lineages, agree on important episodes of royal intervention in the robe controversy, as discussed above, and thus provide a seemingly reliable narrative of the controversy. Nevertheless, these are partisan texts. As the Ayouns ultimately won their conflict with the Atins, dominated the court thereafter, and composed the main histories of this conflict, the available evidence casts an overwhelmingly favorable light on the Ayouns and a perhaps unfair view of the Atins. Moreover, the authors, reflecting monastic competition not only within the Ayoun faction, but also among the Sudhamma monks, emphasized the roles of important participants in this controversy that privileged earlier generations of their own monastic elders.

Manimala also had unique concerns, due to his personal roots and monastic activities outside of the Lower Chindwin that influenced his approach to the history of the Sudhamma monks. Although a part of a Lower Chindwin monastic lineage, he was a native of far away Taung-ngu. In the early 1790s, before Manimala wrote his history, Nyanabhivamsa had dispatched him back to Taung-ngu as a reform monk to convert local monks to the new orthodoxy brought about by the ongoing Sudhamma Reformation. Thus, he may have perceived advantages in both these tasks and in raising his status among the Sudhamma monks by introducing elements into his narrative that demonstrated an important role for monks from Taung-ngu. Manimala explains, in an episode not included in Nyanabhivamsa's history that after a monk known as Shin Vicittalankara arrived in Taung-ngu in 1688, he, like Munindaghosa, took up residence in a forest monastery and traveled about instructing monastic elders in different villages in Ayoun practices.³⁵ Manimala portrays Vicittalankara's instruction as the critical event in the emergence of the Ayoun faction, and the monks he converted to his practices in turn became the founders of all the lineages that made up the Ayoun faction, including the various lin-

34. Mei-hù *hsayadaw*, *Vamsa Dipani*, 147; Maha-damá-thìn-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yá sa-dàn*, 188–89.

35. Mei-hù *hsayadaw*, *Vamsa Dipani*, 131.

eages of Sudhamma monks.³⁶ By giving Taung-ngu monks a central position in the foundation of both the Ayoun faction and the Sudhamma monastic lineages and thus giving the Sudhamma monks local roots in Taung-ngu, Manimala made conversion to Sudhamma practices more attractive to monks in this town. Further, it may also indicate some suppressed hostility to Nyanabhivamsa, who had been appointed over this much more senior monk as chief of religious affairs, Manimala's praises of Nyanabhivamsa elsewhere in his history notwithstanding.

Textual Authority

Thus far, this chapter has argued that Nyanabhivamsa, in his own history of the Religion, defined his monastic community by shared regional ties, monastic lineage, *aranyavasi* practices, and participation in the robe controversy on the side of the Ayoun faction. Nyanabhivamsa's monastic elders had faced a continual struggle, whether in the broader contexts of *aranyavasi* or Ayoun practices, to budge a hesitant royal court to recognize their strict adherence to the Vinaya and decide against their monastic rivals. One more set of practices, however, helped separate Nyanabhivamsa's elders from the latter and eventually won the support of the court: their textual authority regarding canonical and other Buddhist texts.

As mentioned earlier, there are striking parallels between the Sudhamma monks and the Siam Nikaya. In the latter case, Blackburn has redefined for the South Asian context a concept developed by European scholarship on monasticism. Blackburn utilizes "textual communities" to understand the greater emphasis on textuality by the Siam Nikaya, the shaping of monastic and lay views of proper Buddhism through new textual forms, and how these texts influenced those who read them or listened to their reading. Blackburn describes her model of a textual community in eighteenth-century Sri Lanka as a

group of individuals who think of themselves to at least some degree as a collective, who understand the world and their appropriate place within it in terms significantly influenced by their encounter with a

36. *Ibid.*, 141.

shared set of written texts or oral teachings based on written texts, and who grant special social status to literate interpreters of authoritative written texts. Although members of a given textual community are oriented by and toward shared texts, their interpretations of these texts are not homogenous.³⁷

This concept is a useful way to explore the emergence of the early Sudhamma monks as members of a group interconnected through allied monastic lineages, who shared a similar approach to the texts of the Pali canon as well as a particular geographic context, but were not formally organized in a way that fully reflected these relationships and practices.

Blackburn argues that an important method of the Siam Nikaya's demonstration of their skill in Pali texts before the royal court was their emphasis on the translation (including bilingual texts) of Pali literature into local languages. Blackburn views this effort partly as a reflection of the Siam Nikaya's need to localize what was in fact an "imported tradition of higher ordination" and grant it "a decidedly advantageous and locally coherent pedigree."³⁸ The intensified localization of Pali literature, however, was part of a larger project that involved monks throughout the Theravada Buddhist world during and from the eighteenth century. Localization may also be seen as a reflection of broadening literacy and the growth in the importance of Pali literature, through Burmese translation, among the lay population.³⁹

Nyanabhivamsa's history stresses the close relationship between his elders and Burmese translations of Pali literature and the composition of sub-commentaries in Burmese. In addition to Nyanabhivamsa's stress on Munindaghosa's knowledge of canonical texts, he also describes the canonical learning of Shin Aggadhammalankara, one of Munindaghosa's monastic brethren, and founder of an associate monastic lineage among the early Sudhamma monks. Nyanabhivamsa portrays this man's Pali learning as equal to that of Munindaghosa. Aggadhammalankara's specialty was in composing sub-commentaries and supplementary sub-commentaries in Burmese on the chief books of the Pali canon, with specific attention to "unlocking the meaning" (*aya-gaung*) of the books of the *Abhidhamma-pitaka*, including the *Matiga* (the *Matika*, or table of contents of the *Dhammasaṅgani*), the *Datugata* (the *Dhatukatha*), the *Yamaik* (the

37. Blackburn, *Buddhist Learning and Textual Practice*, 12.

38. Blackburn, "Localizing Lineage," 137.

39. Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, 197–98.

Yamaka), and *Patan* (the *Patthana*).⁴⁰ Nyanabhivamsa also uses Munindaghosa's monastic wanderings around Upper Burma to draw connections between his own line and another learned monk, Shin Jambudipa of Pakān-gyi. Nyanabhivamsa relates that before Munindaghosa began his forest life, he introduced Jambudipa to King Tha-lun (r. 1629–1648), who then took Jambudipa under his patronage.⁴¹

Nyanabhivamsa stresses two important aspects of the pupils of Jambudipa's specific monastic lineage. First, Jambudipa's pupils engaged in the rigorous study of Pali texts and their translation into Burmese. The Maniratana monk, for example, made "word for word" translations into Burmese of an extensive range of commentaries and sub-commentaries on books of the Pali canon, including the *Atthasālini* and the *Sammohavinodani*, by Buddhaghosa, and various sub-commentaries. Another pupil, a monk of the Pubba monastery, wrote two Pali works, the *Gulhatthadipani* and an exegesis of word usage in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, as well as Burmese translations of other texts. Second, Nyanabhivamsa again emphasizes that the latter monks were, or became, *aranyavasi* monks, stressing both the textual authority of *aranyavasi* monks and the importance of vernacular translations to the monasticism championed by Nyanabhivamsa.⁴² These references indicated more than an attempt to laud the literary accomplishments of several proper monks. Nyanabhivamsa presents Aggadhammalankara's and Jambudipa's pupils' approach to the transmission of Pali literature to the Burmese as a model for proper monks to aspire to, which, in fact, Nyanabhivamsa's monastic elders did.

Nyanabhivamsa's portrayal of the early Sudhamma monks operates at several levels. As we have seen, he constructed a narrative that describes these monks and asserts their importance to the history of Theravada Buddhism long before 1788. After a tumultuous period of religious reforms, doctrinal controversies, and monastic purges, during which Nyanabhivamsa himself was defrocked, Nyanabhivamsa clearly intended to present not only the struggle of his monastic community, but especially of his own monastic lineage, in a favorable light. His account of Munindaghosa and other elders of his monastic lineage thus emphasized those elements of their lives that were relevant to later developments crucial to understand-

40. Maha-damā-thin-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yā sa-dān*, 173; Paññāsami, *Sasanavamsa*, 117; Mabel Haynes Bode, *The Pali Literature of Burma* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1909), 54.

41. Maha-damā-thin-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yā sa-dān*, 178.

42. *Ibid.*, 178–79; Paññāsami, *Sasanavamsa*, 122.

ing the challenges that Nyanabhivamsa himself faced in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Nyanabhivamsa, who had been raised to the position of chief of religious affairs, over more senior monks among the early Sudhamma monks, also provides reasons or justifications for his own success in winning royal recognition. We can locate Nyanabhivamsa's attempts to assert the supremacy of his own monastic lineage over those of other early Sudhamma monks, for example, in his treatment of Aggadhammalankara. After a discussion of Aggadhammalankara's Burmese translations, for example, Nyanabhivamsa includes a conversation between Munindaghosa and Aggadhammalankara. Munindaghosa, Nyanabhivamsa tells us, initially observes that when they both passed away, ability in the canonical literature would fail, thus implying a shared expertise in the canon with Aggadhammalankara. Aggadhammalankara, however, replies that when Munindaghosa passed on, expertise in the canonical literature would fail, stressing recognition on Aggadhammalankara's part of Munindaghosa's greater canonical prowess.⁴³

The early Sudhamma monks also sustained their authoritative textualism through their emphasis on memorization and recitation of Pali texts, a methodology that figured prominently in conspicuous displays intended to win lay patronage. In several episodes included in his history, Nyanabhivamsa strategically associates these practices with good monks and good rulers. Among these proper monks was Shin Nyana of Taung-dwîn-gyî, who was selected by King Naung-daw-gyî for his wisdom. As Nyanabhivamsa relates, this monk could demonstrate his authoritative textualism not only through his authorship of expositions on the *Nyasa*, the *Yamaka*, and the *Patthana*, but especially through the display to the court of his ability to recite nine or ten chapters of scripture a day.⁴⁴

As discussed by Blackburn, the Siam Nikaya, with royal support, established monastic schools that, for the first time, brought monastic education under a standard curriculum, in which memorization from books of the Pali canon was prominent. Pupils at the second level of study, having already learned the Sinhala script at the first level, read first a biography of the Buddha out loud from manuscript copies. Then, the pupils listened to the oral transmission of another set of texts by their teachers, repeating the sounds in order to memorize what had been read. As Blackburn observes

43. Maha-damâ-thin-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yâ sa-dân*, 173. Paññasami presents this conversation with exuberances not found in Nyanabhivamsa's original text, Paññasami, *Sasanavamsa*, 118.

44. Maha-damâ-thin-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yâ sa-dân*, 187.

"developing memorization skill was as important as learning the content of the texts."⁴⁵ When monks the pupils could draw on these texts by memory to introduce relevant passages into their preaching at "fitting moments." Thus, memorization figured prominently in the oral transmission of parts of the Pali canon to a wider audience.⁴⁶

The establishment of a common curriculum was not attempted in Burmese monastic schools until 1788, when Nyanabhivamsa succeeded in being named chief of religious affairs by King Bò-daw-hpayà. After writing a letter to the king drawing attention to the decline of proper monastic practices, Bò-daw-hpayà sanctioned Nyanabhivamsa's purification of the monastic order. As part of this effort, Nyanabhivamsa dispatched 'correct thinking' monks to preach at the major monasteries of the kingdom where the established monks would be reordained. First, he carefully selected 250 monks and had them repeat and memorize the two books of the *Ubhatovhibanga* (the first two books of the Vinaya), consisting of the *Parajika* and the *Pacit[tiya]*, and then recite them before Nyanabhivamsa in the Sudhamma Pavilion. Those who proved unable to do so were then made to memorize and recite the two sets of monastic rules, the *Bhikkuni Patimokka* and the *Bhikku Patimokka*, included in the *Patimokka*, as well as the *suttas* included in Dhammasiri's *Khuddasikkha*.⁴⁷

Nyanabhivamsa's reforms also established a more systematic educational program for novices. Nyanabhivamsa and other monks of the Ayoun faction had argued throughout the eighteenth century that poor monastic training was at the root of the robe controversy. While Ayoun monks underwent a careful study of canonical texts, they claimed that the Atin monks had relied on the transmission of "corrupt" traditions that had been passed down from teacher to pupil, without careful study of the books of the Pali canon. The fact that Atula had relied on a non-canonical text for authority regarding one-shoulder practices indicated to Nyanabhivamsa, or so he would have his readers believe, that the Atins had a weak command of the canonical texts. Memorization and recitation of the canonical texts, Nyanabhivamsa demonstrated during his reforms, was an essential part of what he viewed to be proper monastic training. The first 250 monks he retrained and dispatched throughout the kingdom served as the first corps of monastic teachers. They began first by familiarizing their pupils with Pali, having them study, "completely," the "words and letters"

45. Blackburn, *Buddhist Learning and Textual Practice*, 55.

46. Ibid., 176–78.

47. Mei-htî hsaya-daw, *Vamsa Dipani*, 160.

of the *Sarana*, the formula repeated in the act of taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the *Sangha* (monastic community). Second, novices were made to memorize the Pali texts regarding the ten precepts, the chastisements (*dan*), and other elements of the *Khandhaka* (a part of the *Vinaya Pitaka* consisting of the *Mahavagga* and the *Culavagga*). Third, the novices were made to repeat, memorize, and recite the *Parajika* and the *Pacit* [*tiya*] in the Sudhamma Pavilion. After successful completion of this training, and thus armed with sections of the Pali scripture that could be drawn upon for their sermons, these novices were dispatched to the towns and villages to preach among the lay population.⁴⁸

The early Sudhamma monks had successfully convinced the royal court of their superior methods of practice, particularly by their displays of authoritative textualism through memorization and recitation of texts of the Pali canon. Royal support for monastic reform under Nyanabhivamsa's direction provided him and his fellow Sudhamma monks with the authority to inspect monastic rivals at home and elsewhere in the kingdom, to defrock those who would not accept re-education in the new monastic schools, and to have those willing to accept the reforms to surrender their monasteries and property, exchange their robes, and submit to reordination within the reformed monastic order under Nyanabhivamsa's supervision.⁴⁹ As we shall see in later chapters, Nyanabhivamsa was not able to sustain royal support for himself, but the new monastic community he erected, guided by the teachings of the early Sudhamma monks, had become the state orthodoxy. This dramatically altered the position of the early Sudhamma monks relative to the monastic establishment in the capital and the rest of the kingdom. While they had formerly been a small regional element of the Ayoun faction, Nyanabhivamsa had successfully absorbed both the Ayoun faction as a whole and other monks willing to convert over to the Sudhamma fraternity. Simultaneously, those monks who refused to be reordained were defrocked or otherwise denied royal patronage. The Sudhamma monks, almost exclusively presided over by consecutive chiefs of religious affairs drawn from Nyanabhivamsa's monastic lineage (three of the five were from Nyanabhivamsa's home village, Maungdaung), would dominate the court without major challenges until the middle of the nineteenth century.

If the early Sudhamma monks had competitors in the interpretation

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., 175.

and identification of orthodox Pali texts, they stood nearly alone among Burmese Buddhists in their authority in Sanskrit literature. This gave them an advantage, a kind of "head start" in their authority to interpret a range of other foreign, non-Sanskrit, texts as well. This was partly due to their proximity to Manipur further north on the Chindwin River. In the early eighteenth century, the spread of Hinduism into Manipur had encouraged the emergence of new literature in that kingdom. The Manipuri ruler Gharib Newaz reportedly burned preexisting indigenous texts, while Brahmin learned men and priests in his kingdom translated Sanskrit texts, such as the sayings of wisdom in the *Charairongba Khungum*, into Manipuri and also produced a range of new vernacular literature.⁵⁰ While some of the early Sudhamma monks educated in Sanskrit, such as Nyanabhivamsa, would later translate such texts for the Burmese court, they were probably already familiar with the new Sanskrit literature because of their interaction with Manipuris who traveled along the river ports of the Lower Chindwin.

The acquisition of Pali religious texts from Sri Lanka continued to be important, but texts drawn from a broader range of sources also began to interest the court. After a series of succession disputes in the 1770s and early 1780s, the Kôn-baung rulers had a special interest in Sanskrit texts, because of a pressing need to strengthen the sacred foundations of the throne. Sanskrit texts were critical for the legitimation of Burmese kingship because, as William J. Koenig explains in his excellent study of Kôn-baung state and society, "Buddhism specifically eschewed ritual and mystery [and thus] Burmese kingship appropriated aspects of Vedic ceremony and Brahmanic ritual to give itself a highly visible aura of mystery and majesty."⁵¹ Initially, some sixty Sanskrit texts trickled into the Burmese royal court in the reign of Hsin-pyu-shin (r. 1763–1776). The borrowing of Sanskrit texts reached a critical mass, however, during Bô-daw-hpayà's reign. The volume of Bô-daw-hpayà's acquisitions was unprecedented; by comparison with Hsin-pyu-shin's collection, Bô-daw-hpayà imported several hundred. Bô-daw-hpayà urged the acquisition of more Sanskrit texts and both he and his successor, King Ba-gyî-daw (r. 1819–1837), dispatched numerous missions to obtain these texts as well as Brahmans from Bengal. Foreign observers note an increase in such missions from 1807,

50. R. K. Jhalajit Singh, *A Short History of Manipur*, 2nd rev. ed. (Imphal: n.p., 1992), 140, 142, 146, 164–65; Gangmumei Kabui, *History of Manipur*, 2 vols (New Delhi: National Publishing House, 1991), 1.263.

51. Koenig, *Burmese Polity*, 91.

although the reasons for this timing remain unclear.⁵² One mission of ten Brahmans sent to Calcutta brought back 236 Sanskrit texts, thirty of which were then translated into Burmese.⁵³ We also have information of one specific mission that made use of the services of a European missionary: Bò-daw-hpayà sent Felix Carey to India, requesting him to purchase for the Burmese court miscellaneous books, including “sacred Hindoo writings.” Bò-daw-hpayà eventually gathered from Sri Lanka and India all sorts of texts (both Pali and Sanskrit) that drew upon South Asian intellectual traditions. Foreigners were well aware of Bò-daw-hpayà’s interest in Sanskrit texts and the present of Sanskrit texts, such as the *Bhagavad-Gita*, became a part of formal audiences with the learned king.⁵⁴

Nyanabhivamsa’s expertise in Sanskrit literature prompted Bò-daw-hpayà, who had just assumed the throne, to summon the young monk to the royal capital to work with his Brahman priests in interpreting the meaning of the *Rajabhiseka*, a Sanskrit text describing the Brahmanic consecration ceremony.⁵⁵ As we shall see in a later chapter, Nyanabhivamsa became Bò-daw-hpayà’s chief mediator between the throne and the Brahmans who Bò-daw-hpayà imported into the royal capital. Brahmans, in addition to their functions in court rituals, had become a kind of corps of state scholars who not only served as knowledge specialists regarding Sanskrit texts, of which the king had built up a substantial collection, but were also contributors to the composition of royal histories. Their role was

52. Although this effort has been portrayed as merely a ruse for political maneuvering (Bode, *Pali Literature of Burma*, 77), this is an old colonial view that warrants serious reevaluation; the evidence, in light of this discussion, suggests instead a more fundamental interest in the texts and the Brahmans themselves. Another mission is also recorded for 1813. B. R. Pearn, “Felix Carey and the English Baptist Mission in Burma,” *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 28.1 (1938): 67.

53. According to the *Thakahta Abhiseka sa-dàn* (1782, p. hka). The author was unable to obtain a copy of the *Thakahta Abhiseka sa-dàn* and is drawing upon a personal communication from Professor Okudaira (2 March 2002) who has in his possession a 1976 photographic copy (provided by the University Books Publishing Committee) of an undated palm-leaf manuscript copy of this text. See also Koenig, *The Burmese Polity*, 92, who estimates the number of imported Sanskrit texts at over 250.

54. *Thakahta Abhiseka sa-dàn*, 1782, f. hka; Michael Symes, *Account of an Embassy to Ava* (London: Bulmer, 1800), 347–48, 353; B. R. Pearn, “Felix Carey and the English Baptist Mission in Burma,” 66; Koenig, *The Burmese Polity*, 92; Bode, *Pali Literature of Burma*, 77.

55. The word used by Nyanabhivamsa in this case, *byan-hso*, can mean “to interpret the meaning of,” as I have suggested here, “to translate” or “to recite.” Maha-damā-thin-gyan, *Tha-ihana-lin-ga-yá sa-dàn*, 193.

gradually refined and the translation of “worldly” texts (*lauki-sa-myà*) into Burmese was eventually limited to the court Brahmans from Manipur. They did so under the overall supervision of Nyanabhivamsa.⁵⁶

Nyanabhivamsa’s role as a Sanskrit scholar helped give him an edge over rival monks in fostering a close relationship with the king and led the latter to name Nyanabhivamsa as his chief of religious affairs. Nyanabhivamsa remained, even after his defrockment and return to the laity, Bò-daw-hpayà’s chief authority on Sanskrit texts and Indian knowledge. This demonstrates one of the ways in which the early Sudhamma monks drew the court’s attention. It also indicates the broad range of knowledge with which these monks were familiar and the expansive scope of their expertise regarding texts, contributing to their reputation for learning among the general lay population. The growth of popular literacy and interest in “book collecting” that made this new learning in the royal capital more relevant to the general lay population will be discussed in the following chapter.

Localization

The discussion in this chapter has made frequent references to the groundbreaking work on the Siam Nikaya in Sri Lanka by Blackburn. Her study is highly relevant for understanding the emergence of the Sudhamma monks in the eighteenth century and their successful entry into the highest levels of ecclesiastical authority in the Burmese kingdom. The fact that these monks shared with those of Blackburn’s study striking similarities in their focus on textual authority, historical representations, the transmission of texts from Pali into the vernacular, a forest-dwelling orientation, and con-

56. Tin, *Myan-ma-mìn Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 2.41; R. R. Langham-Carter, “Four Notables of the Lower Chindwin,” *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 30.1 (1940): 337; Ultimately, when Ba-gyi-daw commissioned the compilation of the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, he included knowledgeable court Brahmans (*poma binnya-shi*), alongside Buddhist monks and other learned men. *Hman-nàn maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi* (Mandalay: Royal Press, 1883): preface to the first volume. As Phayre explained: “On the Burmese conquest of the country, the ancient chronicles were sought after with avidity, and destroyed or carried away, in the hope apparently of eradicating the national feeling. These efforts were, however, futile, many of the ancient books were secretly preserved, or carried away by the owners on their emigration to the adjoining British territory, where many chiefs anxiously watched for an opportunity to recover their country.” Arthur P. Phayre, “On the History of Arakan,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 13 (1844): 23.

spicuous displays of doctrinal adherence, at about the same time, raises questions about a generalized, transregional phenomenon.

Blackburn views her study as a model of localization for other Buddhist societies, a model that can be removed from its temporal context. She tentatively points to the Pagan of the classical period and Chiangmai of the early modern period as prime examples. Comparisons with Burma within the Siam Nikaya's temporal context, however, are perhaps more intriguing. The present study views the rise of the Sudhamma monks as contingent on several intersecting developments, discussed in other literature primarily by Victor Lieberman, in early modern Burmese society that contributed to both royal and popular receptivity to the teachings of the Sudhamma monks by the end of the eighteenth century. Among these developments, which will be treated in greater depth in later chapters, the most important were the growth of popular literacy, administrative centralization, greater administrative sophistication, economic growth, cultural homogenization, and court-sponsored religious orthodoxy.⁵⁷ These forces made the throne stronger and its influence in society more penetrative and pervasive than ever before. Literati, monastic and lay, responded to the needs of the court and the power and wealth it could provide by constructing through their texts a new Burma that reflected the realities and the aspirations of the court. The new textual authority, skills, and strategies developed by the early Sudhamma monks were central to their attractiveness to the court. This attraction was strengthened by related factors, the topic of the following chapter, which made the resources of the Lower Chindwin not only more important than ever before, but more significant than those of any other region in the kingdom outside of the royal capital.

The present chapter has thus attempted to adapt Blackburn's localization model to the emergence of one monastic community in a Buddhist society undergoing social, political, and economic transitions similar to those of eighteenth-century Sri Lanka. The early Sudhamma monks, however, had no need to compensate for a foreign, imported higher ordination, as was the case with the Siam Nikaya. Nevertheless, the early Sudhamma monks emerged from a sparsely populated region of Burma that historically had remained on the periphery of the Burmese state. In terms of regionalism, the early Sudhamma monks also faced the stigma of being outsiders to the traditions of the royal court and more centrally located regions within the kingdom. This goes far to explain why the early Sud-

hamma monks, like the monks of the Siam Nikaya, went to such great lengths to demonstrate to the court and the general lay population their own connections to important figures and practices in Burma's monastic past. The early Sudhamma monks emphasized their greater command of the texts of the Pali canon compared to that of their competitors elsewhere in Burma and especially in the royal city. Among their most effective strategies, however, was their attention to new monastic practices and their possession of unique skills with which their monastic rivals could not compete easily. For example, they not only embraced their experience as frontier monks by emphasizing the greater purity of *aranyavasi* practices, but also connected themselves to forest-dwelling monks who were important to religious reform before the sixteenth century. The early Sudhamma monks, through their command of Sanskrit literature at a time when the court displayed greater interest in Brahmanic rituals, helped them reconfigure the Lower Chindwin from a quiet periphery to the "gateway" to India through Manipur. Finally, these monks ultimately adapted their approach to texts and learning to the rewriting of royal, as well as monastic, histories in ways that contributed to the aura and legitimacy of the royal court and assured its continued alliance and patronage. In effect, the early Sudhamma monks successfully shed any impression of being external to the court by effectively bringing its traditions under their control. The following chapters will discuss these developments in greater depth.

57. Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, 31–65, *passim*.

chapter two



The Social, Demographic, and Political Context

The previous chapter explored how a group of monks emerged in the Lower Chindwin because of their demonstration of authoritative textualism. The rise of Nyanabhivamsa and his disciples to the highest levels of ecclesiastical authority in the kingdom was part of a larger development that included the simultaneous emergence of Lower Chindwin lay intellectuals, warriors, and other elites to the royal court. The present chapter considers the social, political, and administrative factors that assured a close connection between the royal court and monastic and lay literati from the Lower Chindwin in the final decades of the eighteenth century. These factors include increasing literacy, the rise of a prince from his Lower Chindwin appanage to the throne, and the creation of a standing army dominated by men from the Lower Chindwin.

A Multitude of Texts

The early Sudhamma monks not only convinced the court and eventually the general laity that they held supreme textual authority regarding the Pali canon; they also demonstrated that they were crucial to the transmission of knowledge through a broader range of texts. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, these monks came to be seen as masters of texts per se, because of their emphasis on the acts of preservation, translation, and correction.

One factor that uniquely privileged the early Sudhamma monks from the mid-eighteenth century was the survival of their monastic and other

libraries at a time when other Burmese libraries were ransacked or destroyed. During the 1740–1757 civil war, Lower Chindwin monastic libraries or private collections would have been much less susceptible to pillage and incineration than those located more closely to areas of conflict. Peguan soldiers had torched the royal library in Ava when the city fell in 1751, and this probably occurred in the other towns that combatants razed to the ground. Indeed, none of the royal records from the Peguan court appear to have survived the siege of Pegu (1756–1757). If Peguan forces had carried away texts from other areas of Burma during their earlier victories, then these texts probably also disappeared in the same sieges. Lower Chindwin literati thus had a real, or at least a perceived, advantage in the textual debates of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Another factor that benefited the early Sudhamma monks over the long term was a new drive for a broader range of texts that influenced Burmese society as a whole. The interest in new texts appears to have emerged out of the struggle to rebuild libraries after 1757, with the end of the Peguan court. Literati throughout Burma began to recollect scattered texts and attempted to reproduce texts that had been lost. In Burmese Buddhism, one way for literate Burmese to acquire merit is to copy religious texts and every major monastery in Burma had a significant library of such works by the end of the eighteenth century.¹ Beyond these collections, Buddhist monks as well as laymen of means also collected personal libraries. We know that the inheritance of such libraries was a matter of some importance. The royal court became involved in one such case and took the time to issue a decision on the inheritance of Shin Uttamā's personal library (referred to as "the books for his own use" or *sa-bei athoùn a-hsaùn-myà*), the issue being whether one person or the monks as a communal group should inherit the collection; the king decided upon the latter.² The energy involved in rebuilding libraries grew into a passion for collecting more literature. However, haphazard "text collecting," as we shall see in later chapters, became a major cause of concern among the early Sudhamma monks when the regathering and recopying of texts led to errors, feeding debates over the authenticity of texts, especially religious works.

A unique moment in Burmese history occurred when the growing reputation of Lower Chindwin monks for their superior knowledge of Pali liter-

1. Symes, *Account*, 339.

2. Royal Order, 18 June 1806, 5.905. Note that other than the fact that the owner was a monk, there is no indication in the royal order that these were, as a whole or in part, religious books.

ature intersected with the development of intense royal interest in and possession of massive numbers of new texts. In addition to the Sanskrit texts discussed in the previous chapter, Kòn-baung conquests and continued forays into the realms of its neighbors, especially Arakan, Manipur, and Siam, left the court with a vast collection of new texts by the end of the eighteenth century. This was especially true of the conquest of Western Burma. Kòn-baung forces conveyed the entire Mrauk-U royal library back to Amarapura, where learned monks in King Bò-daw-hpayà's court, including Nyanabhivamsa, carefully surveyed its contents.³ It is relevant to stress here that Bò-daw-hpayà's education was rooted in the Lower Chindwin, being taught by Tun Nyo, one of Nyanabhivamsa's elders, and the prince aspired to emulate the textual authority of the Sudhamma monks. More than any other Burmese king before or after, Bò-daw-hpayà, coincidentally Burma's longest ruling king, repeatedly sought to demonstrate to the Sudhamma monks the excellence of his knowledge of Pali canonical texts, as well as Sanskrit literature. When Bò-daw-hpayà came to the throne, he directed significant attention to building up one of the great royal libraries of Asia.

One almost gets the impression that Bò-daw-hpayà simply gathered up every book he could find. At Bò-daw-hpayà's palace in 1802, for example, everything was in disorder. In the main hall "piles of Burmese books and bags that contained more, were heaped in a manner that gave the place rather the semblance of a merchant's counting house or store room, than of a royal hall of audience."⁴ Many of the new texts were stored in the royal library. This library, the *pitaka-taik-daw*, was a large brick structure located to the northeast of the city walls. Unfortunately, when Michael Symes visited it in 1795, the keeper would not unlock the doors to allow him (or us) a clear view of its contents. Just on the veranda, however, Symes spotted perhaps as many as fifty chests of manuscripts indicating, in Symes' estimation, that "it is not improbable, that [Bò-daw-hpayà] may possess a more numerous library, than any potentate from the banks of the Danube, to the borders of China."⁵ This library contained a diverse collection of manuscripts, for although "religious" texts made up the largest portion, it also contained works on "history, music, medicine, painting and romance."⁶

3. Û Tet Htoot, "The Nature of Burmese Chronicles," in *Historians of South East Asia*, ed. D. G. E. Hall, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 57.

4. Michael Symes, *Journal of His Second Embassy to the Court of Ava in 1802*, ed., with an introduction by D. G. E. Hall (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1955), 191.

5. Symes, *Account*, 383.

6. Ibid. Symes had earlier been told that the library had a significant collection of treatises on music (p. 335).

The court and general lay population not only collected texts, these texts were consumed for whatever information could be drawn from them. The following five chapters of the present study will discuss the ways in which these texts, and efforts to control the ideas and data contained in them, produced what I refer to as Burma's "early information revolution." Lower Chindwin monks would play a leading role in this revolution, as they would in the monastic developments in the kingdom from the 1780s. Most of the major historical texts of the Kòn-baung period, for example, were written by, or under the supervision of Sudhamma monks and Lower Chindwin lay literati. This can be called a revolution because it fundamentally reshaped how Burmese thought about and wrote about their society and its history. Moreover, it created what Burmese today believe to be the "ancient traditions" that inform contemporary understandings of state, religion, history, and ethnicity. As we shall see in later chapters of this book, these traditions became viewed as the "old learning" that competed with Western learning that trickled in and then became seemingly overwhelming from the mid-nineteenth century.

The popularity of the Sudhamma monks as text specialists also interconnected with the growth of popular literacy that gave literature, particularly Burmese language literature, a new, more exalted place in Burmese society. By the end of the eighteenth century, Burmese were in the process of becoming perhaps more literate than ever before and literature previously limited to the elite circles of the court had entered popular society. This slow, but steady development was encouraged by the prominence of the Sudhamma monks and new texts in the court. Bò-daw-hpayà's attention to the acquisition of texts and their translation into Burmese influenced members of his court first and then filtered through to a growing lay audience. Bò-daw-hpayà's first crown prince, the father of the future King Ba-gyi-daw, for example, played a significant role in translating some of the texts from defeated kingdoms. In one instance, he gathered about nine literati, including famous writers such as Û Sa and Û Toe, to translate the Thai play *I-naung Wuda Zat* into Burmese. The translation was only completed several decades later, in 1829, and required significant help from captive Thai actors and actresses.⁷

For much of the lay population, the impact of these texts must have been negligible at first. As Symes observed in the 1790s, "[f]ew . . . are versed in the more erudite volumes of science, which, containing many

7. Ba Han, "The Evolution of Burmese Dramatic Performances and Festival Occasions," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 49.1 (June 1966): 11.

Shanscrit terms, and often written in . . . Pali . . . are (like the Hindoo Shasters) above the comprehension of the multitude."⁸ Symes may have been correct about more technical subjects such as astronomy and medicine, but ideas from Sanskrit texts were indeed entering the popular imagination through public performances, by either human actors or puppets, at fairs (*pwes*), sponsored by local officials such as governors or township headmen (*myó-thu-gyis*). Most of these performances appear to have been both serious and humorous, most frequently focusing on the love between princes and princesses and the intervention of ogres and sorcerers. As Indian texts, such as the *Ramayana* and other epics, were translated into Burmese, they provided source material for new plays that focused, for example, on Hanuman, Rama, and Sita.⁹

Lay Literacy

Increasing literacy provided Lower Chindwin monks with a growing and interested lay audience. Successive Burmese kings had contributed to political centralization and better administration from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries in the context of an evolving domestic economy. Burma thus needed literate, knowledgeable people to record commercial transactions, to note the contents of trading vessels, to gather demographic and tax data, to manage local, regional, and national governance, and to communicate across a more stable and expansive kingdom. In the late seventeenth century, Manucci even described Burma as a kingdom "governed by the pen."¹⁰ In the early nineteenth century as well, foreign

8. Symes, *Account*, 123.

9. Henry Burney, *The Journal of Henry Burney in the Capital of Burma 1830-1832*, with an introduction by Nicholas Tarling (Auckland: University of Auckland, 1995), 58; Arthur P. Phayre, "Private Journal of His Mission to Ava in 1855," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 22.2 (1932): 71, 73; Henry Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission Sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855, With Notices of the Country, Government, and People* (London: Smith, Elder, 1858), 72; Sometimes the singing and dancing troupes found in every town and village in Burma would accompany these *pwe* performances. Robert Boileau Pemberton, "Abstract of the Journal of a Route Travelled by Captain S. F. Hannay," in *Selection of Papers Regarding the Hill Tracts between Assam and Burmah and on the Upper Brahmaputra* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1873), 90.

10. "It is a kingdom governed by the pen, for not a single person can go from one village into another without a paper or writing, whereby the government is made most easy." Niccolao Manucci, *Storia do Mogor: Or Mogul India 1653-1708*, William Irvine, tr. (London: John Murray, 1906), 1.373.

observers not only referred to literate Burmese officials and functionaries at all levels of the Burmese state, but also to high rates of literacy. John Crawford's estimate that ninety percent of Burmese were literate in the 1820s appears to be too extreme.¹¹ Lower estimates made by other travelers and data collected by later British census-takers, however, suggest a male literacy rate of somewhere in the neighborhood of fifty percent.¹² Certainly, monasteries provided for literacy. Nevertheless, monastic education did not provide many of the kinds of necessary practical skills that lay schools (*ein-gyaungs*) could provide. Many of the skills taught in the lay schools were useful to those who sought employment after leaving the monastery or even to royal servicemen who sought additional ways to enhance their income in their spare time.¹³

Despite Manucci's observation mentioned above, there is no reliable evidence regarding the degree of literacy throughout Burmese society in the seventeenth century. Several indicators are available, however, for the growth of literacy over the course of the eighteenth century. First, merchants and others among the general population increasingly used *thekkarits* (contractual records). Second, while foreign accounts are generally silent on popular literacy for the early eighteenth century and before, numerous foreign observers from the late eighteenth century record widespread popular literacy. As Symes observed in 1795, "A knowledge of letters is so widely diffused, that there are no mechanics, few of the peasantry, or even the common watermen (usually the most illiterate class), who cannot read and write in the vulgar tongue."¹⁴

In addition to the role of Buddhist monasteries in educating young boys in reading, writing, and arithmetic, new educational institutions began to complement them. Lay schools emerged in the 1820s and 1830s. Learned laymen, who had been educated in the monasteries, ran these schools. The schools were often set up in their private homes and "the system of teaching and text-books are the same as those used in monasteries."¹⁵ Boys up to the age of seven to ten were educated in preparation for

11. In 1827, John Crawford estimated that over ninety percent of Burmese males were able to read. See John Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in the Year 1827* (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), 386.

12. Government of India, *Report on the Census of Burma for 1891* (Rangoon: Government Press, 1892); personal communication by Victor Lieberman.

13. Tin, *Myan-ma-miin Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 4.205.

14. Symes, *Account*, 123.

15. Albert Fytche, *Burma Past and Present with Personal Reminiscences of the Country* (London: C. Kegan Paul, 1878), 2.206; Foley describes such schools in Western Burma in 1835: "[S]uch as are not engaged in any pursuit or employment requiring all their

the monastery, as they could not be admitted into the monastic schools until they were nine or ten.¹⁶

In pre-Kòn-baung Burma, it is probably the case that although a few women in the court might be literate, the world of reading and writing was generally outside the reach of most females among the general population. This began to change in the late eighteenth century, as being literate became an important social value. Female education was growing within the lay community. Monastic schools in Burma did not provide for female education. Nunneries were available, but they were few and generally occupied by older women rather than young girls. The lay schools provided education for girls as well as for boys, indicating a broader concern for the importance of literacy in Burmese society. Low noted the existence of lay schools specifically devoted to female education in Tenasserim in 1830 and Malcom found them in Upper Burma in 1840.¹⁷ They were in operation in the royal capital as well. As the Baptist missionary Thomas Simons observed, while walking down a street in that city in 1835: "[I] was surprised to see a school of twenty-five or thirty girls collected in a private house, and taught by a Burman. I am informed there are others in the city."¹⁸ Even where schools that welcomed girls did not exist, the wealthy could hire private tutors to instruct their daughters. Among the less well-

time, devote a portion of it to the education of children, entirely gratis; less labour being expected from the children than is imposed upon them in the Kioums [monasteries]. Children under nine years of age and of both sexes are admissible to such schools, the rules . . . being less strict than those enforced in the monasteries; it is therefore not uncommon to meet with children of a very tender age at such schools." William Foley, "Journal of a Tour through the Island of Rambree, with a Geological Sketch of the Country and Brief Account of the Customs, &c. of Its Inhabitants," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 5 (1835): 31.

16. U Kaung, "A Survey of the History of Education in Burma Before the British Conquest and After," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 46.2 (1963): 9.

17. Symes, *Account*, 161; Foley, "Journal of a Tour through the Island of Rambree," 31; As Low observed in 1830 Tenasserim, "There are female devotees, or nuns, who dress in white cotton cloth, and live close to the courts of the kyaums or pagodas. But they are always past that stage of life at which superstition makes a renunciation of the world seem meritorious, and which might cause their presence to be dangerous to the cold professors of celibacy within the walls." James Low, "History of Tenasserim," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 5 (1838-1839): 330; Howard Malcom, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1839), 235.

18. "Extracts from the Journal of Thomas Simons," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.12 (December 1836): 281.

to-do population, increasing literacy meant that family members could teach young females how to read.¹⁹

The work by Maung Htin Aung, admirable as the first major Burmese historian to use the English language to mount a serious challenge to colonial historiography, nonetheless erred in his periodization of the transformation of Burmese literature in the Kòn-baung period. Well known for his nationalist takes on Burmese history, Htin Aung divided the history of literature in Kòn-baung Burma into two main periods. As he explained in his *History of Burma* (1967), other scholars marked the end of the first period with the death of King Singu (1782), but he considered it more appropriate to center it on the peace treaty between China and Burma arranged on 13 December 1769.²⁰ Htin Aung wrote his history in 1967 at a time when the Burma of his day was concerned with signs of a growing identification with the Peoples Republic of China among Burma's Chinese population. One has to assume that contemporary politics influenced Htin Aung's view.

Htin Aung's characterization of the two periods is more useful. As he explains, the first period (1752-1769/1782) saw two main developments. First, the writers, both men and women, were no longer only monks.²¹ Second, the new literature, including *The Jeweled Mirror*, the first Burmese novel, looked beyond Buddhist texts for source material. This literature consisted of both prose narration and versified dialogue and village life was its subject matter. The second period (1769/1782-1885) was characterized by more formal court literature that was "completely different" from the popular literature of the first period. These new texts included the court dramas brought to Burma after the sack of Ayudhya (Thailand),

19. Malcom observed that "[p]rivate schools for girls are not uncommon in large places." Malcom, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia*, 1.193; As Low explained, "Girls are often taught at schools superintended by women." Since Low distinguishes between these schools and the nunneries of bhikkunis, there was likely no confusion with nunneries; he also observed in 1830 Tenasserim, for example, "Young women are frequently taught to write and read by their mothers or relatives." Low, "History of Tenasserim," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3 (1836): 330.

20. As he explains: ". . . for that period constituted an age of triumph for the Kòn-baung Dynasty. There was a definite change in the temper and outlook of the Burmese people after that date, and in spite of the achievements and victories of Bodawhpaya's reign the decline of the third Burmese empire began after its great victory over China." Htin Aung, *History of Burma*, 192.

21. As he explains, "these writers were all laymen and laywomen." Ibid.

which were originally based on Indian epics, and consisted solely of dialogue.²² As will be discussed in the following chapters, Htin Aung correctly points to a major development in Burmese literature, although this might be better characterized as a diversification rather than a transition. Thereafter, literature and writing would never lose its importance among the general population.

Court Politics

In the previous chapter, we have seen how regionalism played an important role in the emergence of Nyanabhivamsa's monastic group. Regionalism was also reflected in the rise of lay literati, warriors, and Bò-daw-hpayà. The rise of a Lower Chindwin prince to the throne certainly did not spark the attempts by the Lower Chindwin monks to exert hegemony over monastic affairs in the royal capital, but it helped to guarantee the success of these efforts. Bò-daw-hpayà's successful coup and his relationship with Tun Nyo, an important member of the Lower Chindwin literati and former monk, thus played an important role in Nyanabhivamsa's introduction into the court.

In the early Kòn-baung period, the politics of regionalism were inseparable from the politics of the court, mainly because of tensions involved in royal succession and the fact that Alaùng-hpayà's numerous sons depended upon the resources of their local appanages to make bids for the throne or to make more secure their place on it. The eventual winner in these succession contests was Alaùng-hpayà's fifth son, later known as Bò-daw-hpayà, who as a prince had been given the Lower Chindwin town of Badon as his appanage. The politics that would make the prince's success possible were set into motion shortly after King Hsin-pyu-shin's son, Singu, ascended the throne on 10 June 1776. The new king began his reign by purging one of the most powerful men of his father's court, the popular chief minister (*wun-gyi*, a member of the Council of Ministers), Maha-thi-ha-thu-ra. Singu began by charging Maha-thi-ha-thu-ra's daughter, Singu's north queen (Burmese queens were assigned different quarters of the palace and entitled according to cardinal directions) with infidelity and ordered her execution. Singu then demoted Maha-thi-ha-thu-ra from his ministerial rank and exiled him to Sagaing. Over the course of 1776–1777,

22. *Ibid.*, 192–93.

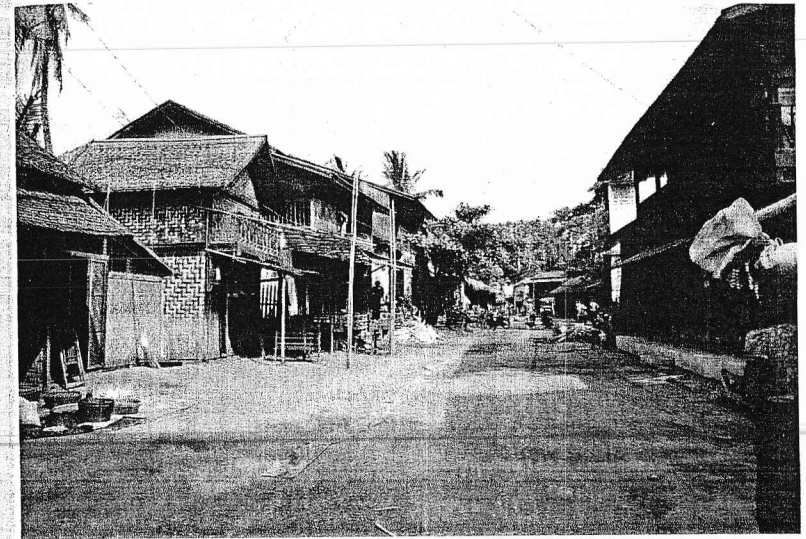


FIG. 8. Badon (Alon) Today

Singu also executed, imprisoned, or banished all potential royal challengers to the throne. Despite these precautions, one of Singu's uncles, the Amyin Prince, made a bid for the throne in September 1777. The Amyin Prince failed and Singu ordered his execution.²³ Singu's fear of further challenges convinced him that the wisest course of action would be to deprive yet another uncle, Bò-daw-hpayà, of the appanage of Badon. Singu then sent Bò-daw-hpayà into exile in Sagaing, just outside the royal capital, bereft of wealth and princely privileges.

The most serious and only successful challenge to Singu's position on the throne involved Bò-daw-hpayà and Maha-thi-ha-thu-ra, both of whom had been exiled to Sagaing. They formed a conspiracy to unseat Singu with the overt goal of placing on the throne Maung Maung, the son

23. Symes, *Account*, 89–92; Than Tun, *The Royal Orders of Burma, A. D. 1598–1885*, 3.xxxvii; Father Vincenzo Sangermano, *The Burmese Empire a Hundred Years Ago*, with an introduction and notes by John Jardine (London: Edinburgh University Press, 1893), 64.

of the late Naung-daw-gyì (r. 1760–1763). The coup occurred on 5 February 1782, while Singu was away from the capital, and the successful rebels named Maung Maung the new king. After forcing the officials in the court to take an oath to the new king, the coup leaders summoned to the capital old ministers from the pre- and early Singu years and placed them in important positions. Ultimately, Singu was declared an “outlaw” and the new leadership sent forces overland to arrest him.²⁴ A second coup occurred six days after the first, on 10 February 1782. Reportedly, the interior ministers (*atwin-wuns*, members of the royal Privy Council) decided that Maung Maung was an unsuitable ruler. They placed Bò-daw-hpayà on the throne, citing Alaung-hpayà’s deathbed order in 1760, that his sons would succeed him, eldest to youngest. Bò-daw-hpayà accused both Singu and Maung Maung of not maintaining the kingdom’s stability and ordered Maung Maung’s execution.²⁵ After capturing and executing Singu and his family, over the next few days, Bò-daw-hpayà proceeded to purge Maung Maung’s and Singu’s allies in the royal city.²⁶

Bò-daw-hpayà’s rise to the throne marked a key entry point for the Lower Chindwin literati into the world of the Burmese royal court. We do not know many of the details of Bò-daw-hpayà’s relationship with his appanage, such as the revenues he extracted or how much time he spent there. Many of the local revenue inquests (*sit-tàns*) from the eighteenth century have not survived, and not one appears to be available for Badon. From sources on other appanages, it is clear that Bò-daw-hpayà would have had a wooden palace and a local contingent of armed men. The question of whether Bò-daw-hpayà spent all of his time in Badon or none at all is irrelevant to his connections with local men from the Lower Chindwin. During the Kòn-baung period, appanage grantees derived not only their material wealth from their appanage but also their servants. At the highest level, princes (and queens) had their own ministers, other court officers, military commanders, soldiers, writers, and pages. As with the court, entry into this system at the junior level was generally as a page and one worked one’s way up from there. The men who performed these functions for Bò-daw-hpayà would have come from Badon Township and subordinate villages. With a body of loyal men in place, the rise of a prince to the throne

frequently meant that men from the prince’s appanage would be given significant posts in the new court, although many of the most experienced ministers remained in place over the course of a number of reigns.

Tun Nyo of the Lower Chindwin village of Maungdaung was appointed as Bò-daw-hpayà’s teacher. Tun Nyo was already a noted scholar and had produced several texts that focused on grammar and religion. Although King Singu later deprived Bò-daw-hpayà of this appanage, the latter maintained his close relationship with Tun Nyo. When Bò-daw-hpayà finally came to the throne, he appointed Tun Nyo as head of the royal granaries (*kyi-wun*), a powerful position in the royal court. Formally, this appointment granted Tun Nyo administrative control over all matters concerning the royal granaries throughout the kingdom.²⁷ As the rice stored in the royal granaries provided grain to monks under royal patronage, this appointment also gave Tun Nyo a degree of informal influence in monastic affairs. Soon after, Tun Nyo became the governor of the Twin-thin Revenue department (Twin-thin *taik*), with the title of Maha-si-thu.²⁸ Revenue departments were part of the crown demesne, established to draw off a share of revenues for the royal treasury, and thus overlapped territorial administration divisions of which they were not a part.²⁹ Nonetheless, in practice, the demand by insatiable courts for revenues and the vaguely defined limits of the authority granted governors of the revenue departments provided the latter with both the incentive and the justification to interfere in territorial administration whenever they so wished. The Twin-thin Revenue Department had authority over the southeastern section of the Chindwin River Valley, the southern half of the Mu River Valley, and a large tract of land south of the Irrawaddy River. Cutting through the heartland of the Kòn-baung state, this was no inconsiderable expansion of Tun Nyo’s power and authority. The appointment also reinforced Tun Nyo’s importance to Bò-daw-hpayà’s court. Formally, as its governor, Tun Nyo handled all revenue matters in the areas assigned to the Twin-thin Revenue Department, apparently to excess, managing “absolutely all” free men (*athis*) and servicemen (*ahmú-dàns*) in the department’s villages and towns.³⁰ Informally, Tun Nyo became one of the most powerful men in

24. Symes, *Account*, 92–94; Phayre, *History of Burma*, 208.

25. Royal Order, 11 February 1782, 4.211; Symes, *Account*, 97–8; Sangermano, *Burmese Empire*, 65; Phayre, *History of Burma*, 209.

26. Royal Order, 11 February 1782, 4.211; 13 February 1782, 4.216; 14 February 1782, 4.217; Sangermano, *Burmese Empire*, 65; William M. D. Hunter, *A Concise Account of the Kingdom of Pegu* (Calcutta: John Hay, 1785), 55–56.

27. J. S. Furnivall and Pe Maung Tin, eds., *Zam-bú-dì-pá ok-hsaung-kyàn* (Rangoon: Burma Research Society, 1960), 65.

28. Ba Thein, “A Dictionary of Burmese Authors,” *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 10.3 (1920): 151.

29. Koenig, *Burmese Polity*, 102.

30. Furnivall and Pe Maung Tin, *Zam-bú-dì-pá ok-hsaung-kyàn*, 65.

the kingdom, with significant influence in royal appointments and royal patronage.

More importantly, Tun Nyo connected Bò-daw-hpayà to other Lower Chindwin literati. We know that Tun Nyo personally introduced to Bò-daw-hpayà two literati who would soon occupy important posts in Bò-daw-hpayà's reign. One was Tun Nyo's nephew, the poet Û Aw, also known as Seinda Kyaw-thu. The king gave the latter the revenues of the district of Muda as well as the position of governor of the Hsin-kyin Revenue Department.³¹ The other was the young Sudhamma monk, Nyanabhivamsa, who, as we have seen in the previous chapter, came from Maung-daung as well. Bò-daw-hpayà would eventually name him the chief of monastic affairs, or head of the monastic order, and, although later defrocked, he afterwards became an important court minister, entitled Maha-damá-thìn-gyan. In this capacity, he cooperated with another Sudhamma monk from the Lower Chindwin, the Second Monywa *hsayadaw* in compiling the *Glass Palace Chronicle* (*Hman-nàn maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*).

Although these and other men rose to the highest levels of the Burmese court in Bò-daw-hpayà's reign, Lower Chindwin men began to fill other administrative ranks as well. There is evidence, for example, that Lower Chindwin men made up a considerable number of the *pitaka* copyists and other scribes in the service of the court.³²

Royal Manpower

The Chindwin River Valley was one of early modern Burma's political and cultural frontiers. Kachins and Nagas who remained outside of Burmese royal control populated the upper reaches of the river.³³ By the early modern period, the Shan state of Mogaung controlled or dominated the upper sections of the river politically, just as Mohnyin dominated the upper eastern bank and Kale the middle portions of the river at roughly the same time.³⁴ Until the late eighteenth century, much of the upper west bank

31. Tin Naing Tò, *Kòn-baung-ket Awè Myó-wun* (Yangon: Pyi-soun, 2002), 180.

32. See, for example, the efforts of Nyanabhivamsa, by then an ex-monk entitled Maha-dhamma-thingyan, to prevent scribes from Badon (Alon) and Dabayin from being entered into local military units. Royal Order 24 January 1825, 8.430.

33. G. E. R. Grant Brown, comp., *Burma Gazetteer: Upper Chindwin District*, vol. A (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1929), 2–3.

34. Grant Brown, *Burma Gazetteer*, 8, 10, 11.

remained under the control of Manipur, although Burma began to make inroads there in Alaung-hpayà's reign. The Burmese state apparently made no sustained effort to bring under its control the Chin Hills, further west.³⁵ From the Pagan period, however, successive Burmese courts had brought parts of the Lower Chindwin under their rule, but the frontier that resulted moved up and down the river because of cycles of Burmese dynastic rise and decline.³⁶

The Lower Chindwin's position as a frontier was altered by one of the great upheavals of Burmese history, the collapse of the Burmese state in 1751 and its full resurrection by 1757, which left many other areas of Burma devastated. Early modern Burma experienced a series of cycles of administrative rise and collapse, as demonstrated first by Victor Lieberman. Until the 1540s, Burma was divided into numerous competing kingdoms, although two main political centers, Ava in Upper Burma and Pegu in the Lower Delta, were dominant. The First Taung-ngu Dynasty, based at Pegu, created a unified Burmese state for the first time since the decline of the Pagan kingdom in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The Restored Taung-ngu Dynasty did the same after the former collapsed, but chose to shift the capital to Ava in the 1630s, where it remained until the mid-eighteenth century. The Lower Burmese rebellion (1740–1757) divided the kingdom once again with the reestablishment of an independent court at Pegu. This conflict caused the demise of the Restored Taung-ngu Dynasty and the rise of a new one, the Kòn-baung Dynasty. The Peguan court actually won the conflict in 1751 when its forces sacked Ava.³⁷ At first, there was little resistance to them.³⁸ In 1752, however, a village headman eventually known as Alaung-hpayà, who had been left in place as the headman of the village of Mok-hsò-bo (later, Shwebo), and his follow-

35. This refers only to the southern Chin hill tracts. A Burmese map from 1795 refers to the people of the southern Chin Hills as "subjected" Chins and those of the northern hill tracts, running parallel to the Chindwin River, as the "wild" Chins. See map included in W. S. Desai, "A Map of Burma (1795) by a Burmese Slave," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 26.3 (1936): 152.

36. A brief sketch is given in Grant Brown, *Burma Gazetteer*, 10–11. As Aung-Thwin has explained, as Pagan's political reach expanded, areas brought under new settlement were referred to as *taik*, the Lower Chindwin being divided into two such *taik*. Michael Aung-Thwin, *Pagan: The Origins of Modern Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 101–3 (particularly the map on p. 102).

37. Symes, *Account*, 6; Alexander Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory* (London: William Ballentine, 1808), 1.101, 133; Thi-rí-ú-zana, *Làw-ká-byu-ha-kyàn* (Rangoon: 1968): 5; Shin Paññasami, [Sasanavamsa] *History of Buddha's Religion*, 126; "Phongsawadan Môn Phama," 2.14.

38. Symes, *Account*, 6–7; Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, 1.163–64.

ers slew the local Peguan garrison and routed a force dispatched against them. Alaung-hpayà gained the support of other local headmen and led Upper Burmese armies in a campaign that successfully vanquished the Peguan court by 1757.³⁹

The 1740–1757 War had important implications for the demographic significance of the Lower Chindwin Valley to the Burmese state. Lieberman has made a convincing observation that disruptions in much of southern and central Burma encouraged a demographic shift away from the populous districts of Meiktila, Yamethin, and Myingyan to the Mu and Chindwin Valleys from 1752.⁴⁰ This view is confirmed by first-hand accounts of late eighteenth-century Burma that found the lower and central Irrawaddy River Valley bereft of villages and weakly peopled.⁴¹ Moreover, in 1745 and again in 1752, royal appointments of important military commanders were clearly concentrated in northwestern Burma. Since the court expected these men to raise substantial local levies, this concentration of appointments is a good, if indirect, indication of the relative demographic balance of Avan territories.⁴²

Based on population statistics reconstructed by Koenig, the Lower Chindwin Valley generally and two governorships specifically were clearly critical to the Kòn-baung state's resources well into the 1820s. The number of servicemen at the state's disposal determined its most important pool of manpower resources. An examination of population registers for 1783 and 1826 reveals that only the royal capital could rival two of the Lower Chindwin governorships, Badon and Ta-ba-yìn, in the number of royal servicemen settled in them. Moreover, in terms of both free and service populations, Badon remained the largest population center in the kingdom, including the royal capital. In 1783, for example, the overall populations of these two Lower Chindwin townships and of the royal capital were approximately 121,926 (Badon), 102,634 (Ta-ba-yìn), and 108,199 (Amarapura) people.⁴³

39. Symes, *Account*, 7–12, 15; Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, 1.134, 164.

40. Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, 231.

41. As the Governor of the British East India Company wrote in about 1750, based on local reports: "The War . . . has harassed the poor people in the Principalities of Martavan, Toungu, Pegu. And Syrian, has so far disgusted them that a considerable Number of them, to shun the repeated oppression, are retired into the most desert places of the Country, by the Sea Side; having quitted all the Neighbourhood of Cities and Towns, chusing rather to live among the Wild Beasts. . ." Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, 1.130.

42. Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, 231.

Of course, the royal capital was the largest area for the settlement of servicemen, but the Lower Chindwin centers stood not far behind. In 1783, these service populations were ranged as follows: eighty thousand (Amarapura), sixty-eight thousand (Badon), and fifty-seven thousand (Ta-ba-yìn) people. By contrast, the next largest center of crown service settlement was Myei-du with only thirty-four thousand servicemen, almost exactly half the size of that of Badon, and nearly all other townships in the kingdom fell within the seven to ten thousand range or below.⁴⁴ A temporary, but major drop in the service populations of Badon and Ta-ba-yìn in the 1802 register, a drop of about thirty-two thousand (Badon) and twenty-eight thousand (Ta-ba-yìn) servicemen, may be attributed to an especially heavy drain of men due to combat and disease in royal campaigns against Siam in the 1790s.⁴⁵ Over the long term, however, at least in terms of manpower resources, Badon and the region around it amounted to something like a second bastion of royal power in the Kòn-baung state. Broader historical developments also ensured the Lower Chindwin's importance to the Burmese state from the accession of Bò-daw-hpayà to the throne in 1782.

The Standing Army

One major factor that helped to guarantee a strong role in court politics and monastic affairs for Lower Chindwin monks and lay literati was the placement of a select and armed group of their kinsmen around the royal

43. See Koenig, *The Burmese Polity*, 241. I do not include the 1802 population register as it appears that some figures refer simply to new additions. I use the 1783 register as a benchmark, and others to estimate the entire population. Calculations are based on the seven people to a house rate Koenig suggests.

44. Koenig, *The Burmese Polity*, 245.

45. As Sangermano explains, "they have fallen off not a little. For the continual wars with rebel princes of the Siam [Shan and Thais], and particularly with the one of [Chiengmai], which have since occupied the Burmese arms, together with the fatigues incident to them, and the diseases arising, partly from unwholesome food, partly from the malignant properties of the air in the countries where they have been engaged, have carried off vast numbers of the soldiery." Sangermano, *Burmese Empire*, 101. Why the Lower Chindwin should have been burdened with especially high casualties is likely due to overdependence upon the loyalties of units drawn from the king's former appanage.

palace. The Kòn-baung "standing army" included forty-one main regiments, as well as five specialist contingents.⁴⁶ Of these, twenty-nine regiments and the specialist contingents were under the authority of the Council of Ministers (*hlut-daw*). Each regiment also had a *wun* in the capital who mediated between the state (that is, the Council of Ministers) and the regiment and looked out for its interests, acting as its "protector." As Koenig observes, the standing army thus did not represent a single cohesive unit, but rather individual entities with their own special relations with the state,⁴⁷ and, one might safely assume, unique regimental identities and loyalties.

The remaining twelve regiments were divided into two brigades, forming the Royal Guard, the core of the standing army. They were not under the authority of the Council of Ministers, but rather the Privy Council (*byè-daik*), the members of which were more intimately involved in the affairs of the palace and who were also watched with greater scrutiny by the throne. In Bò-daw-hpayà's time, these twelve regiments were treated with special reverence and played not only practical martial roles, but also performed important ceremonial functions, as well as surrounding the king on his grand departures.⁴⁸ Two Lower Chindwin governorships, Pán-kyi and Alon (formerly Badon), each provided the bulk of the men for six regiments, the former for the Outer Brigade and the latter for the Inner Brigade.⁴⁹ The court depended upon the Outer Brigade for major campaigns, forming a reliable force that could fight on its own or bolster notoriously unreliable levies.⁵⁰

The Inner Brigade was closely associated with Bò-daw-hpayà's rise to the throne. At that time, the new king established Badon as the main royal bastion of power, aside from the royal capital, claiming Badon as his auspicious (*mingala*) township. He changed the name from Badon to Alon in reference to its security (*alon-kyoun*) from all dangers. This identification was cemented by his establishment there of the six Inner Guard regiments mentioned above. They were to be recruited from among Burmans

46. Tin, *Myan-ma-mìn Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 4, 265–71. One of these was the Taungma-yapin Regiment. *Dutiya Maha-ya-zawin-gyi* (Mandalay: n.p., 1919), 354.

47. Sangermano, *Burmese Empire*, 98; Koenig, *Burmese Polity*, 115.

48. Koenig, *Burmese Polity*, 115; One 1780s text describes the placement of the six regiments who marched before and behind the king on his ceremonial marches. See Zei-yá-thin-hkaya, *Shwe-bon-ní-dàn* (Rangoon: Zwei-sa-bei-reib-myoun, 1957), 32.

49. Û Maung Maung Tin, *Shwe-nàn-thoün Wa-ha-ya Abhidan*, vol. 1 (Rangoon: Buddha Sasana Ahpwe Press, 1975), 1.209–11.

50. Lieberman refers to the Outer Brigade as the "backbone of the Kòn-baung Infantry" until 1885. Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, 251.

(Myanma) of a proper age and of "good" strength. To strengthen group identity, they were tattooed on the back of their right hand with the image of a lion (*kyin-tha*).⁵¹ Special uniforms also identified unit membership, but these were apparently worn irregularly.⁵² The Inner Brigade, stationed in more intimate proximity to the court than the Outer Brigade, was depended upon to handle rebellions by unhappy ministers or members of the royal family. Not surprisingly, the Inner Guard played a critical role in at least four succession disputes and usurpations, contributing to a fifteen-year period in which three sitting Kòn-baung rulers were overthrown.⁵³ Due to the length of Bò-daw-hpayà's reign, the Lower Chindwin basis of these regiments became institutionalized and remained the preserve of Lower Chindwin martial men until the end of the dynasty in 1885.

The Lower Chindwin also supplied men for other military units. Although not technically part of the two brigades per se, another important regiment stationed at the capital was the Ta-kà-ni Regiment, the famous Red Gate Guards, who were also drawn from the Lower Chindwin area. These men were the gatekeepers of the kingdom, for the Red Gate (*Ta-kà-ni*) was the sole entrance to the royal enclosure within the fortress walls and, like the twelve units of the royal guard, this unit was also directly responsible to the Privy Council and not to the Council of Ministers. Anyone who wished to enter the palace first had to seek a permit from one of the interior ministers of the Privy Council and these guards took care to check that visitors brought only the clothes on their back, food, and a mat, lest someone sneak a weapon into the royal compound.⁵⁴ Another unit, the company (not regiment) of Yun Guards, originally a group of Chiang-mai captives resettled in the Lower Chindwin in the Restored Taung-ngu Dynasty, performed special guard functions.⁵⁵

51. Maung Maung Tin, *Shwe-nàn-thoün Wa-ha-ya Abhidan*, 1.209–11.

52. Trager and Koenig, *Burmese Sit-tàn*, 392. The account by Kirkman Finlay explains, however, that when he visited the court in early 1879: "[The royal guards] presented a most ludicrous appearance having no uniforms." Kirkman Finlay, "An Account of a Journey from Rangoon by Train and Steamer to Mandalay which took place between 21 January and 14 February 1879" [paper manuscript number 380016] AMs, 21 February 1879. School of Oriental and African Studies, Special Collections, London, United Kingdom, 44–45.

53. These include kings Ba-gyi-daw (1837), Thayawaddy (1846), and Pagan Min (1853).

54. R. R. Langham-Carter, "Maha Bandula at Home," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 26 (1936): 122–23; Tin, *Myan-ma-mìn Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 4.17.

55. Trager and Koenig, *Burmese Sit-tàn*, 386–92; this record can also be found in Tin, *Myan-ma-mìn Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 4.50–52.

Altogether, these fourteen or so guard units (the Inner and Outer Brigades, the Red Gate Guards, the Yun Guards, and probably others) were located at the heart of the kingdom, at the main gate, and at the outer and inner walls of the royal fortress and royal compound in everyday proximity to the ministers, Brahmans, and the royal family. Of the twenty-two military advisors who "were in daily and nightly attendance on the king," thirteen were commanders of these regiments.⁵⁶ Although stationed in the capital, the soldiers of both brigades (and of the Red Gate and Yun Guards) maintained an intimate relationship with their home villages. Each brigade at the capital, for example, was represented by only ten percent of the total number of men in the unit, who served on a revolving basis. Thus, at any one time, ninety percent of the regiment remained at home. Local resources were also tied to the support of these troops.⁵⁷

There was a close inter-relationship among Lower Chindwin families. The Lower Chindwin monastic and lay literati emerged from the same villages and towns as the members of Royal Guard regiments, although it is not easy to separate into two groups men who crossed these abstract lines. Moreover, there were family connections that crossed over regimental lines and it appears that Lower Chindwin men were prominent in other main regiments in addition to the Royal Guard, the Nat-shin-ywè Regiment being just one example. The Lower Chindwin literati came from military families and many married into them. The minister and scholar Kinwun Mìn-gyi Û Gaung (hereafter referred to as Gaung), another Lower Chindwin man, for example, was the son of a commander of one of the Inner Brigade regiments and he married into another Lower Chindwin military family. Moreover, his brother, Û Gyaung, was a chief military commissioner (*sit-kè-gyi*) and commander of royal soldiers in the Pan-kyì governorship (which presumably would have included those men of the six Outer Brigade regiments who were not on active duty in the capital).⁵⁸ These connections may help to explain, in part, his survival as court min-

56. J. G. Scott and J. R. Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1900–1901): 1.2, 491–92.

57. Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 4.266–67; Hardiman, *Burma Gazetteer*, 157; R. R. Langham-Carter, "The Burmese Army," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 27.3 (1937): 255. On their rates of pay, see Maung Maung Tin, *Shwe-nàn-thoàn Wa-ha-ya Abhidan*, 1.209–11.

58. Paul J. Bennett, *Conference under the Tamarind Tree: Three Essays in Burmese History* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1971), 122; R. R. Langham-Carter, "The Kinwun Mingyi at Home," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 25.3 (1935): 121, 125.

ister to the end of the dynasty after the counter-coup of 1879 and events afterward removed his chief allies, as we shall see in chapter 11.

The Lower Chindwin remained critical to the Kòn-baung state for the remainder of the dynasty for other reasons as well. It was, again, the most populous area of the kingdom, and thus was a major source of state manpower, especially of royal servicemen. Moreover, as Toe Hla has demonstrated on the basis of data collected by J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, the Alon and Pán-kyi governorships, one the home of the Inner Brigade and the other of the Outer Brigade, were the two primary locations of royally sponsored annual festivals. Alon hosted nearly twice as many (nineteen) as any other single location (eleven, for example, in Pán-kyi) and far more than most other single locations (with the exception of several towns, most hosted only one or two per year). This is significant because such fairs were not only a significant source of royal revenues, due to fees and the leasing out of booths, but also serve as indicators of local trade activity. One might justifiably infer from this data that by the end of the dynasty, Alon, the exemplar in so many other advantages to the state and local elites alike, was also the kingdom's busiest trade zone aside from the royal capital.⁵⁹

This chapter has attempted to put both the emergence of the early Sudhamma monks, discussed at length in the previous chapter, and the lay literati of the Lower Chindwin into a broader social, demographic, and political context. In addition to factors discussed in reference to the Sudhamma monks, other factors helped alter the position of the Lower Chindwin from one that was peripheral to the Burmese state to one with a more intimate and important relationship with the Kòn-baung court. These factors include the demographic shift in favor of the Lower Chindwin area and the rise of Bò-daw-hpayà, who held Badon as an appanage, to the throne. The next few chapters will examine the impact of the rise of Lower Chindwin monastic and lay literati upon the court and its intellectual foundations.

59. Û Toe Hla, "Money-Lending and Contractual 'Thet-kayits': A Socio-Economic Pattern of the Later Kòn-baung Period, 1819–1885" (PhD diss., DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 1987), 91.

chapter three

Royal Ancestors

Zeī-yá-thin-hkaya, a relatively minor court official, included in his 1783 treatise on court practices the following story. When, as a prince, the ancient king Azadathat murdered his father King Bein-bi-thara, he committed one of the five evil acts that bring immediate punishment. Azadathat saw evil omens and evil noises and it was only after he followed the Buddha's command to make and worship an image of his father that the evil noises gave way to pleasant ones and good signs replaced the bad omens. A similar event happened during the reign of King Alaung-sithu of the Pagan dynasty. The king was a boastful man and once claimed that his royal ancestors were not as powerful as he was. When he turned blind due to this act of disrespect, the court Brahmans informed him that only by making and worshipping golden images of his royal ancestors would he regain his vision. After he had done so and was on his knees worshipping the images, the latter fell down, except for those of kings Pyu-zàw-hù, Anaw-rahta, and Kyan-zittha. When Alaung-sithu looked around, he now found that he was able to see clearly. Following these accounts, Kòn-baung kings, as did their predecessors, kept golden images of their ancestors in the Zetawun Hall of the royal palace.¹

Nothing was more important to the Kòn-baung kings than their security on the throne. Moreover, nothing helped to secure the throne more than the demonstration of the sanction of one's royal ancestors for one's own succession. Kòn-baung rulers, like their First and Restored Taungngu dynastic predecessors, were the constant target of jealous uncles,

Parts of this discussion saw earlier form in the afore-cited Charney, "Centralizing Historical Tradition," 185–215, published in *South East Asia Research* in 2002.

1. Zeī-yá-thin-hkaya, *Shwe-bon-ní-dàn*, 60–61. A century after Zeī-yá-thin-hkaya wrote his account, the golden statues were melted down by the British war prize committee.

ambitious ministers, and anyone else who sought the power and riches that the possession of the throne promised. The Kòn-baung kings could build massive armies and erect stockades and stone fortresses to keep foreign enemies at bay, but challenges to the throne were usually internal. Earlier administrative measures, meant to prevent political fragmentation that moved those with the most significant claims to the throne closer to the royal court and under the royal eye, guaranteed this situation. The early Kòn-baung kings thus welcomed initiatives that promised to raise the stature of the king ever further above that of potential rivals within the court. This required strengthening the royal lineage.

These kings were only some of the contributors to a wider discourse. Others included the literati, and particularly those from the Lower Chindwin, who worked proactively to aid their chief benefactors, the early Kòn-baung kings, by producing new texts that strengthened the theoretical and symbolic foundations of the Kòn-baung kingship. A re-reading of indigenous accounts, a broader analysis of Burmese texts, and a greater focus on the movement of ideas in eighteenth-century Burma, all suggest that literati moved kings more than vice versa. The movement of texts and ideas also demonstrate that the evolution of Kòn-baung era mythologies of state and the origins of kingship cannot be understood independently of regionalism. While chapter 6 will discuss the ways in which political and cultural regionalism was broken down by literati and kings through an emphasis on ethnicity, the present chapter examines how literati and kings masked the existence of regionalism in the kingdom through the appropriation of kingly legitimization schemes.

By giving agency to the literati rather than simply to the court, this chapter departs from the prevailing historiography on initiatives taken to strengthen the throne. Previous scholarship has viewed a continuity of legitimizing state mythologies that strengthened the foundations of the Kòn-baung court as a throne-driven resurrection of the traditions of the Restored Taungngu Dynasty (1597–1752), with increasingly greater emphasis on Mahasammata, the legendary first king of the world. According to this view, after the Peguan court executed the last Restored Taungngu king in 1752, the rural peasant Alaung-hpayà put ministerial survivors of the court to the task of reestablishing the traditions of the fallen court, the only available model of courtly culture available to those Burmese who did not side with Pegu. Over time, a series of kings initiated greater articulation of these traditions through the services of these court ministers. Ultimately, Bò-daw-hpayà sought a greater textual basis for these tradi-

tions and this resulted in the adoption of more refined Brahmanic consecration ceremonies and an expansion of the ranks of the court Brahmans who would perform such functions. The *Glass Palace Chronicle*, the *Great Kòn-baung Chronicle* (*Kòn-baung-hset Maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*), and several other indigenous histories, as well as the observations of European visitors, such as Symes, all support this view. This chapter argues, however, that an analysis of how these sources were constructed demonstrates that they reflected the outcome of literati efforts, which nonetheless sought to draw attention to royal agency rather than to their own.

Building the Legal Basis of Kingship

Those Upper Burmese court literati not killed or captured in 1751 found themselves in uncomfortable circumstances. They had to abandon Ava and their homes as fire and pillage had gutted the town and a detachment of soldiers from Pegu had turned the town into a military barracks. They also must have been less than thrilled with Alaung-hpayà's decision not to base his new capital in one of Upper Burma's major towns, but instead in his village, Mok-hsò-bo.² It is unclear what their new homes were like, but they must have lacked the luxuries to which they were accustomed.

Moreover, court patronage of the literati had not yet recommenced. Alaung-hpayà was always on the battlefield and on those occasions when he made decisions about the state or settled legal cases, he did so on the field without recourse to Burmese legal texts. Alaung-hpayà also sought advice, not so much from the literati, but from a handpicked group of "heroes" consisting of peasant leaders who had joined him during his initial revolt against the Peguan court. Nor were there many minister-ships available for distribution, as Alaung-hpayà had placed his relatives, all villagers, in charge of most of the important positions of command and administration. Although new conquests would otherwise have produced new positions to fill, Alaung-hpayà left in place outlying governors and administrators who switched sides and joined him as he campaigned southwards.³ For the remaining elites of the Restored Taung-ngu court,

2. Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, 1.163.

3. Ibid., 1.167. Alaung-hpayà also circulated letters to southern administrators promising to leave them in place, even to aggrandize their appointments, if they gave him allegiance. Ibid., *Oriental Repertory*, 1.135.

who formerly had possessed significant power through their control of state minister-ships, this manner of affairs must have been discouraging.

As a village headman, Alaung-hpayà had the opportunity to see firsthand the chronic problems of court administration, especially the tendency for the emergence of ministerial cliques. Alaung-hpayà thus wished to avoid the constrictions of "normal" administration. As he is reported to have confessed to one European visitor: "I protest . . . that State is a burthen to me, 'tis a confinement which I endure only on account of the necessity there is for it, towards the support of Government."⁴ Again, Alaung-hpayà centered his new state on his home village, allowing him, at least for a time, to run his court free from the kinds of problems that brought down the Restored Taung-ngu court.

Former court literati found opportunities to win Alaung-hpayà's support. Initially, Alaung-hpayà appears to have had in mind only one model of kingship, which was drawn from rural Upper Burmese traditions. Earlier, Û Kalà, the most important member of the Upper Burmese literati of the late Restored Taung-ngu period, had already sought more localized accounts of the origins of Burmese kingship.⁵ In the 1730s, Kalà included some of these stories in his *Great Chronicle* (*Maha-ya-zawin-gyi*), the most important Burmese chronicle of the period. One such story was a pre-Buddhist origin myth that traced the lineage of Burmese kings to Pyu-zàw-hù (Pyu-mìn-hù), the son of the Sun God and a naga princess, making the royal ancestry of Burmese kings sacred by connecting them genealogically

4. Ibid., 1.152.

5. Not much is known of Û Kalà's life. We do know that Kalà belonged to a wealthy family and lived in Ava in Upper Burma in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Being a man of means and having access to royal libraries, he had the time and the resources necessary to compile the *Great Chronicle* at some point between 1724 and 1730 (although the text basically covers Burmese history only up to 1711). One of Kalà's foci is the advice of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century Burman minister, Wun-zin Min-ya-za. According to various Irrawaddy Valley texts, a Burman king once found a village boy of exceptional learning and knowledge concerning the court. The king made this boy, who became known as Wun-zin Min-ya-za, a royal minister. He also became the royal adviser to King Min-gaung (r. 1401-1422) of the Ava Dynasty (1364-1555). Stories, reputed to be the anecdotes and advice that he had related to these kings in order to better inform their rule, have been passed down from generation to generation. Some slipped into the narrative of Kalà's *Maha-ya-zawin-gyi*, but aside from the ability to identify, logically, these as being at least as old as Kalà's history, we really do not know when other stories attributed to Wun-zin Min-ya-za developed or who really authored them.

to a solar dynasty.⁶ Pyu-zàw-hti had demonstrated his superior ancestry by defeating six mythological enemies of Pagan and establishing the ruling line of that city. Kalà's claims probably reflected deep-seated historical traditions that had entered the popular imagination. While not an ambitious myth, for its utility was limited to the Irrawaddy Valley, the Pyu-zàw-hti origin myth was highly effective within the context of Upper Burma, excluding claims by kings based outside of the region. The hardy Pyu-zàw-hti, the superman of great physical prowess, was probably a hero who would have been familiar to most Upper Burmese since their childhood.

Pyu-zàw-hti was an especially valuable model for warrior-kings because he represented the qualities, such as great physical prowess, that such kings themselves tended to emphasize. Alaung-hpayà would have fit the Pyu-zàw-hti image very well, standing well over six feet tall and possessed of great strength, if we can rely on the accounts of European observers who met him in Mok-hsò-bo in 1755. Before them, the king made almost inappropriate demonstrations of his own physical prowess. At one point, Alaung-hpayà drew "the sleeves of his Vesture over his Shoulders, and tucking the lower part up to his Crutch," as he boasted "See these Arms and this thigh . . . amongst 1000 you won't see my match. I myself can crush 100 such as the King of Pegu."⁷

The Pyu-zàw-hti model of kingship, however, was culturally specific and its appeal was not very strong among non-Burmese. Unlike the Restored Taung-ngu kings, however, Alaung-hpayà intended to bring under his rule much of mainland Southeast Asia. He thus needed a universal model of kingship that could win his easier acceptance by the population of Lower Burma and other regions. Alaung-hpayà turned to the literati who were already seeking new ways to legitimize his rulership.

The literati provided Alaung-hpayà and his successors with an additional, textual model through the compilation of authoritative legal and other texts. By doing so, they reasserted their traditional role in government and appealed to the peasant warlord. About the same time as Alaung-hpayà's victory at Pegu, early Sudhamma monks began to put into Burmese Pali and Mon legal texts. In 1758, Tun Nyo, when still a Sudhamma monk, completed in Burmese verse the *Kandaw-pakeinnaka*

6. Maung Kalà, *Maha-ya-zawin-gyi*, ed. Saya Pwa (Rangoon: Burma Research Society, 1926), 1.143; Shin Sandá-lin-ka, *Mani-yadana-poun* (Rangoon: Hainthawaddy Press, 1901), 10–11; Zei-yá-thin-hkaya, *Shwe-bon-ní-dân*, 99–100; see also the discussion in Okudaira, "Rekishiteki Haikai," 9–13.

7. Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, 1.151–52.

Linka, purporting to offer the laws established by Mahasammata, the reputed first king of the world. The selection of texts translated indicates that the literati saw Mahasammata as an appropriate model for Alaung-hpayà, but also represents again the attempts by the early Sudhamma monks to win royal recognition for their textual practices. Over the next few decades, these monks would attempt to assert their authority over legal codes, just as they did with other texts, to win court attention, but they were not without their competitors. In 1763, a non-Sudhamma monk, Shin Tejosara, translated another Manu *dharmathat* into Burmese prose. Manu was sometimes used as another name for Mahasammata and at other times as the name of a nobleman who advised Mahasammata on legal matters. In the present text, Brahma was reborn as a nobleman named Manu; while Mahasammata ruled, he left legal decisions to this nobleman. This may have been intended as encouragement for Alaung-hpayà to rule, but to leave the day-to-day governance to established monastic literati in the court, such as Tejosara. Tun Nyo, however, followed Tejosara's work with several more *dharmathats* including the *Manu-vannana Linka* (1764) and the *Manu-yin Linka* (1767), both in Burmese verse. Ultimately, the Sudhamma monk Shin Nandamala (the Sonda *hsayadaw*) compiled in Pali his own *Manu-yin Dhammathat* at an unknown date during Bò-daw-hpayà's reign.⁸

These legal texts also provided a grander vision of kingship that would have presented a very attractive model for Alaung-hpayà and his successors. In addition to providing an overview of the laws of Manu, the Burmese text refers to Mahasammata not only as the first king of the world but also as a *hpayà-laung* or embryo Buddha (*bodhisattva*). It seems probable that Alaung-hpayà accepted this model, for, like Mahasammata, the king too claimed to be a *hpayà-laung*, as he became popularly known (Alaung-hpayà is an alternative ordering of *hpayà-laung*). This put Alaung-hpayà on an equal footing with his rival, King Banyà-dalá at Pegu, who also claimed to be a *bodhisattva*. Banyà-dalá confirmed this shared status as Buddhas-to-be in letters dispatched to Alaung-hpayà on 28 June 1756 and 19 October 1756, in which he referred to both himself and Alaung-hpayà as the two Bodhisattvas who would become Buddhas. Alaung-hpayà appears to have been less willing by that time to grant the same honor to

8. E. Forchhammer, *The Jardine Prize: An Essay on the Sources and Developments of Burmese Law* (Rangoon: Government Press, 1885), 92, 94–97; J. S. Furnivall, "Manu in Burma: Some Burmese Dhammathats," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 30.2 (1940): 366.

his besieged rival. This reluctance may have been because Banyà-dalá's correspondence repeatedly referred to Alaùng-hpayà as his younger brother (*nyi-daw*), implying that while they both may have been *bodhisattvas*, Banyà-dalá was the senior, and thus the superior, of the pair.⁹

Over the course of the 1750s, interest continued to build among the literati regarding the legal basis of Alaùng-hpayà's new kingdom. Alaùng-hpayà laid aside the codification of the laws of his kingdom until his victory over Pegu. In the months that followed the conquest of Pegu, Alaùng-hpayà remained in Mok-hsò-bo and turned to the reintegration of the kingdom. Some reports suggest, however, that Alaùng-hpayà actually spent these months indulging in women, rather than participating much in the hard work of state building.¹⁰ Whether Alaùng-hpayà did so or not, at the very least he left most of the technical work to the literati.

Alaùng-hpayà responded to the initiatives taken by the literati in legal literature by turning to Maha-thiri-utta-ma-jaya who compiled a legal text covering the customary law in operation in his kingdom, interweaved with the laws of Manu discussed above. The text, known as the *Manú-kye Dhammathat*, laid down a moral basis for one's behavior as an individual, by which one would be rewarded or punished. Burmese Buddhist law heavily influenced the *Manú-kye*.¹¹ Nevertheless, problems remained. Succession disputes caused significant problems in the 1760s to 1770s. Force of arms could reconsolidate the kingdom, but threats to the throne within the court required different approaches, many of which failed. Although secure rulership had been achieved in both the Western and Upper Burmese courts by 1763, serious threats remained and would lead to the overthrow of several Upper Burmese kings in the following decades. In both the Upper and Western Burmese courts, literati came to the aid of the kings with theories of royal legitimation that helped to strengthen the ruler-ship, in theory if not in practice.

The claim to the throne by Alaùng-hpayà and his sons, who had been village peasants, was tenuous throughout the three successive reigns of Alaùng-hpayà and his two eldest sons and was not made easier by Alaùng-hpayà's myopic solution to the problems of royal succession. Some ministers claimed that Alaùng-hpayà, while on his deathbed in 1760, had informed them that his sons should succeed him one after another,

9. Forchhammer, *Jardine Prize*, 97; Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, 1.164; Royal Order, 28 June 1756, 3.161; Royal Order, 19 October 1756, 3.167.

10. Symes, *Account*, 41; Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, 1.109.

11. Forchhammer, *Jardine Prize*, 96, 99–100, 102, 107.

according to their seniority. While it offered a temporary line of succession, this proved to be insufficient over the long term.¹² Alaùng-hpayà's death immediately revealed the weaknesses of this method of succession. Following the news of his father's death, Hsin-pyu-shin disregarded the order and made his own failed bid to succeed to the throne at the expense of his eldest brother, Naung-daw-gyi. Hsin-pyu-shin, however, retracted his claims when general support was not forthcoming, although he would later violate this succession order again when nominating an heir during his own reign. Now, following Alaùng-hpayà's order for succession, Naung-daw-gyi (r. 1760–1763) ascended the throne. The most popular of Alaùng-hpayà's generals, Min-gaung-naw-rahta also made a move on the throne when he disregarded Naung-daw-gyi's order to come to the court. Min-gaung-naw-rahta took Ava in June 1760, declared himself king, and then circulated letters among the nobles and ministers calling upon them to support his claim to throne. Naung-daw-gyi defeated him in open battle and then besieged Ava until its fall at the end of 1760.¹³

The struggle between the throne and Min-gaung-naw-rahta aided the process of ministerial aggrandizement. As the military leadership weakened, civil ministers reestablished ministerial cliques and gained power not only at the expense of the army, but also of the court. As one observer commented in late 1760, Naung-daw-gyi "in the present posture of his Affairs, will not quarrel with [the ministers] for a Trifle; as they are all leading Men in the Country, and can be of great Service, or Prejudice, to his Interest at this time."¹⁴ Indeed, one governor simply ignored an order from Naung-daw-gyi, apparently unconcerned about any royal retaliation.¹⁵ In any event, Naung-daw-gyi died soon after, in 1763, leaving behind a legacy of weak succession. To strengthen the prospects for clear royal succession, Naung-daw-gyi's successor, Hsin-pyu-shin (r. 1763–1776) established the more stable system of primogeniture. Hsin-pyu-shin thus declared his own eldest son, Singu, to be his nominated heir; making members of his court swear loyalty to him.¹⁶ Although a more far-sighted move than Alaùng-hpayà's some years before, the revived system of pri-

12. Sangermano, *Burmese Empire*, 61–62.

13. Paññasami, *Sasanavamsa*, 131; Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, 1.362–64, 372, 373, 381–82; Symes, *Account*, 53–55, 56, 60, 63; Sangermano, *Burmese Empire*, 62; Royal Order, 12 September 1760, 3.266–67; Royal Order, 14 September 1760, 3.268–70.

14. Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, 1.381.

15. *Ibid.*, 1.390, 397.

16. Sangermano, *Burmese Empire*, 63; Symes, *Account*, 87.

mogeniture conflicted with the political realities of Alaung-hpayà's family, leaving resentment that would cause significant trouble in the years ahead. The Amyin prince, who was the rightful heir, was upset and plotted to unseat Hsin-pyu-shin. Although the plot was discovered, Hsin-pyu-shin did not execute the Amyin prince after his mother begged for the life of her son.¹⁷

The literati initiated the composition of new texts that contributed to the Buddhist basis of Burmese kingship and stressed the integration of Upper and Lower Burma into one Buddhist kingdom. In 1763, for example, Manu-vannana Kyaw-din composed the *Manu-sara-shwe-myin*, a compilation that draws together materials from the *Wagaru*, *Maharaja*, and *Manú-kye dhammathats*. As more evidence of the self-recognition of cultural synthesis between Upper and Lower Burma, Kyaw-din admitted that he relied in part on the work of ancient Mon monks in their recension of a *dhammathat*. With the help of Shin Candabanya, Shin Tejosara, and the Taung-dwin-gyaw monk, Kyaw-din updated the Pali of the older *dhammathats* to make them more easily accessible to the literati of his time. In 1772, Kyaw-din went further and compiled the *Manu-vannana*, based on "all former dhammathats" rather than upon the select few utilized in the *Manu-sara*.¹⁸

The Legitimacy of Kòn-baung Kingship

The literati's most significant contributions to the strength of the state, however, were made in the legitimization schemes supporting Kòn-baung kingship. As Koenig has observed, the early Kòn-baung kings gradually sought more universally valid royal legitimization schemes that connected them with Mahasammata.¹⁹ During the last few years of Hsin-pyu-shin's reign, Kòn-baung literati began to think more about the lineage of the reigning dynasty and found new ways to strengthen its legitimacy. One such man was the poet Û Hpyaw, the royal tutor of Prince Singu. Although it would be almost a decade before the Upper Burmese literati would embrace the Western Burmese legend of Abhiraja and Dhajaraja as a major foundation myth supporting Kòn-baung legitimacy, Hpyaw took a major step to strengthen Kòn-baung legitimacy and unconsciously made

17. Sangermano, *Burmese Empire*, 63.

18. Forchhammer, *Jardine Prize*, 105; Furnivall, "Manu in Burma," 366.

19. Koenig, *Burmese Polity*, 86–89.

it possible to adopt the Abhiraja myth at a later time. Hpyaw, while clinging to the legendary Upper Burmese royal ancestor Pyu-zàw-hti, enhanced the royal lineage by connecting it with the Buddha and drawing it back to Mahasammata in his *Poem of the Grantee of Paleik* (*Paleik-sa ei-gyin*), composed in 1774.²⁰

In Western Burma, the Mrauk-U court faced a different kind of succession problem than that experienced by Ava. The main problem was that the kind of powerful ministerial families who had helped to weaken the Restored Taung-ngu court also plagued the Western court.²¹ In 1775, just after the *Poem of the Grantee of Paleik* was composed in Ava, an anonymous member of the Mrauk-U court literati put together a series of royal orders and related documents dating from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries into a text that became known as both the *Arakan Chronicle* (*Rakhine Ra-zawin*) and the *Life of Mìn-ra-za-grì of Arakan* ("Rakhine Mìn-ra-za-grì Arei-daw-sa-dàn").²² The text produced would have important implications for Burmese kingship in the following decades, for it drew upon Western Burmese historical traditions that provided a common origin myth for the kings of both Mrauk-U and Ava.

One of the documents included in the *Arakan Chronicle* is a history written by a minister entitled *Maha-zei-yá-thein-hka*.²³ In his history, *Maha-zei-yá-thein-hka* provided a new version of an old Western Burmese royal legitimization myth that focused on a single founder king named Kan-ra-za. *Maha-zei-yá-thein-hka*, however, moved beyond older versions of the story by expanding it, introducing Kan-ra-za's father, Abhiraja, giving Kan-ra-za a younger brother, known as Kan-ra-za the Younger, and attributing to Kan-ra-za (now, "the Elder") the establishment of the first kingdom of the Irrawaddy Valley, Tagaung. *Maha-zei-yá-thein-hka* opens his story with a war between King Daragu and King Abhiraja in northern India, which prompted Abhiraja's migration to Burma. As he relates:

20. Û Hla Pe, "Letteratura Birmana," 22–23.

21. Nga Mi, "Rakhine Ra-zawin," MS 3465a, AMs, n.d. [circa 1840], Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library, London, 226b, 228a.

22. Shin Kawisara, "Rakhine Arei-daw-poun" MS 136913, AMs, 1839 [copy of the 1787 original], National Library, Ministry of Culture, Yangon, Union of Myanmar.

23. The text provides the year 935 of the Burmese era, but this appears to be a variation of the era dates as occurred occasionally in Western Burmese and Irrawaddy Valley histories. The uncorrected era dates provide additional evidence of the faithfulness of the copy to the original text, as the dates could otherwise have been corrected quite easily. The correct Burmese era date should be 955 or 1593 CE.

[Abhiraja] went upstream to Kanbilawat and stayed in [Moriya]. . . King Abhiraja later moved from [Moriya] and built Thindwei on the upper Irrawaddy. Because of [problems with the Hill tribes living] near this town, he moved again and built Pagan. Floods ruined this [town] and [Abhiraja] moved and built Tagaung. After King Abhiraja died, his eldest son, Kan-ra-za [the Elder], reigned. When three years had passed, [Kan-ra-za the Elder] gave the palace to his younger brother, Kan-ra-za the Younger, and [Kan-ra-za the Elder himself] established Kalei-ra-za-kyou . . .

When sixteen years had passed, [Kan-ra-za the Elder] crossed the [Arakan Yoma] and established Kyauk-pan-daung on the upper Katsabannadi River. At this time, [Kan-ra-za the Elder] sent a request to Queen Shin-saw-sit, of the royal line of Marayu, in Nila-ban-taung [for her daughters] and made her eldest daughter, Thu-nanda, his chief queen and her youngest daughter, Pwa-daw-si, his middle queen. [Kan-ra-za the Elder] also made Saw-pintsa-nari, King Kandalarat's daughter, his north queen. [Kan-ra-za the Elder] reigned in Kyauk-pan-daung for twenty-four years and then moved to the ancient town of Danyawaddy.

. . . [Kan-ra-za the Elder's] great queen, Thu-nanda, gave birth to a royal son, Sila-ra-za. From the middle queen, Pwa-daw-si, were born two daughters, Keinnara and Pintsa. Saw-pintsa-nari, the north queen, gave birth to a royal son, Zambu-deip. Sila-ra-za was married to Keinnara and they were placed into the palace. Zambu-deip was married with Pintsa and, after Kan-ra-za the Younger had died in Tagaung, Zambu-deip took possession of Tagaung.²⁴

Maha-zei-yá-thein-hka thus claims that when Kan-ra-za the Younger died, he was succeeded by a son of Kan-ra-za the Elder and an indigenous Western Burmese queen. Maha-zei-yá-thein-hka does so to stress that Western Burma (Arakan) was the immediate source of central Burmese kingship, through both an elder brother of the royal race who made Western Burma his home and his son by an indigenous Western Burmese queen. More importantly, this myth established a lineage connecting such kings to the Kshatriya kings of northern India and ultimately to Mahasammata. This text thus went much further than the *Poem of the Grantee of Paleik* in providing for a clearer line connecting both Western and Upper Burmese kings to Mahasammata.

24. "Rakhine Min-ra-za-grī Arei-daw sa-dān," ff. 4a, 4b, 5a.

In Upper Burma, literati were also reworking Burman heritage by both centralizing regional traditions and by strengthening the universal legitimacy of the reigning dynasty. As mentioned earlier, Singu's pre-regnal teacher, Hpyaw, had initiated in his 1774 *Poem of the Grantee of Paleik* a Kōn-baung dynastic lineage that connected Burmese kings to Mahasammata. In October 1781, the completion of the *Treasured Precedents* or *Mani-yadana-poun*,²⁵ composed by an obscure monk known as Shin Sandá-link-ka, further strengthened this connection. The *Treasured Precedents* is a historical text that purports to provide a record of the advice of Mīn-ya-za, advisor to the fourteenth and fifteenth century Avan kings Mīn-gyi-swa-saw-kei and Mīn-gaung. This advice includes suggestions on the proper behavior of the king and examples of wise rulership.

More importantly, the *Treasured Precedents* is the first Upper Burmese historical text to draw from Western Burmese historical traditions the Abhiraja myth. The *Treasured Precedents* opens with the Abhiraja myth as summarized above.²⁶ The standard historical chronicles before this date, Shin Maha Thilawuntha's *Ya-zawin-kyaw* (sixteenth century), the controversially dated *Zata-daw-pon Ya-zawin* (attributed in 1960 to the seventeenth century), and Kalā's *Great Chronicle* (ca. 1730) do not include this myth.²⁷ Other texts, such as the *Old Pagan Chronicle* (attributed to the sixteenth century) and the *Tagaung Chronicle* (date unknown) do not include this myth either, and the latter, despite its seemingly comprehensive title, does not discuss the foundation of Tagaung, suggesting that no relevant traditions were available to the author.²⁸ Although Hpyaw had earlier begun efforts to connect the Kōn-baung kings to Mahasammata, the *Trea-*

25. It is difficult to provide an English title for this work. "Mani" means gem, "yadana" can also mean gem, jewels, or treasures, and "poun" can mean "pile of" or precedents. See L. E. Bagshawe's notes regarding this problem in his translation of a portion of the text. L. E. Bagshawe, tr., *The Maniyadanapoun of Shin Sandalinka* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1981), 2n. Bagshawe suggests "Precedents as Precious as Jewels," "Heap of Precious Jewels," or, his final choice, "The Book of Jewel-Precious Precedents." "Treasured Precedents" is used in this book for its easier rendering into English and its accurate representation of the contents of the text.

26. Sandá-link-ka, *Mani-yadana-poun*, 6-7.

27. Shin Maha Thilawuntha, *Ya-zawin Kyaw* (Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1965); Shin Samantapasadika Silavamsa, *Zata-daw-pon Ya-zawin*, ed. Û Hla Tin (Rangoon: Ministry of Culture, 1960). On the latter text, see Aung-Thwin, *Myth & History*, 68-69.

28. Pe Maung Tin, "Introduction," in *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*, tr. Pe Maung Tin and G. H. Luce, xiii-xiv (London: Oxford University Press, 1923).

sured *Precedents* clarified this connection, for the story of Abhiraja provided a simple account demonstrating that both the Buddha and Mahasammata belonged to their lineage.²⁹

This origin myth provided a fuller elaboration of these genealogies to demonstrate a clearer lineage from Mahasammata to the Burmese kings, through the intermediary of the solar race of the Sakiyan clan. Mahasammata, again, the first human king of the world in Buddhist thought, served as both a legitimizing model for unifying Burmese kings and, secondarily, as an origin myth for certain Burmese kings who drew up loose genealogies connecting themselves to him.³⁰ The Burmese version of this myth, however, added a second migration from India, by a king of the Sakiyan clan, named Dhajaraja, who reestablished Tagaung after it had been destroyed.³¹ The addition of the Dhajaraja segment represents a further, and critical, step in the development of the Abhiraja myth. The Dhajaraja segment is clearly a "sanitized" repetition of the original Abhiraja segment of the myth. However, the Dhajaraja segment does not appear in precolonial Western Burmese historical texts. Thus, this alteration of the original myth and its integration with that same original myth into a single narrative in the *Glass Palace Chronicle* in 1829 appears to be a variation of the Abhiraja myth that is peculiar to post-1781 central Burmese historical literature. The reason for its inclusion is clearly the intention to give Upper Burmese rulers their "own" Sakiyan founder, thus removing from the myth, the primacy of the Western Burmese royal line.

The borrowing of the Abhiraja myth from Western Burma is mysterious. As discussed, this myth was clearly a Western Burmese historical tradition of considerable vintage.³² Earlier Upper or Lower Burmese historical traditions do not include it. We do know that the *Life of Mìn-ra-za-grì of Arakan* found its way into Burma in the eighteenth century, although we cannot pinpoint the year, or indeed if there may have been another text that served as the main mediator of this story. This "borrowing" may have occurred due to the normal spread of texts by monks and others between

29. This development is discussed in depth in Charney, "Centralizing Historical Tradition," 185–215.

30. For Burmese thought on the Mahasammata myth as legitimation for earthly rulers, see Koenig, *The Burmese Polity*, 65–67, 69–71, 73–74, 93; Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, 66, 72–74, 83; S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand Against a Historical Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 93–94.

31. *Hman-nàn maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 1.175–182; Koenig, *Burmese Polity*, 86–87.

32. Charney, "Centralizing Historical Tradition," 185–215.

the two states of Mrauk-U and Ava. Although separated by the Arakan Yoma mountain range, information, including both literati and texts, moved back and forth between the Western and Upper Burmese courts. In 1768, King Abaya-maha-ra-za gave the position of "skilled writer" to one man named Do Wei because the latter was knowledgeable of general literature as well as of the religious literature. The king ordered him to write a sentimental poem and then to go about the palace teaching those in the palace how to read. Do Wei reportedly used the opportunity to have sexual relations with the chief queen and fled to Upper Burma when the king found out. After Hsin-pyu-shin heard about Do Wei, he ordered him seized and brought before him.³³ It is thus plausible that it was Do Wei who introduced the myth to Upper Burma.

Another possible explanation is that when envoys arrived from the Mrauk-U court in 1781, during the last year of Singu's reign, they brought with them the 1775 text from Mrauk-U to Ava. The son of the King of Mrauk-U had sent envoys to Ava to ask for Singu's help in putting down a revolt. Since the *Life of Mìn-ra-za-grì of Arakan* offered a version of history that granted a shared heritage to the kings of Mrauk-U and Ava, it is possible that the envoys would have presented it to Singu to encourage a friendly response. If this was the case, the envoys were to be severely disappointed: Singu refused to intervene.³⁴ In any event, the story of Abhiraja and Dhajaraja was "borrowed" by Upper Burmese literati from that year and it became the major origin myth of the Kòn-baung rulers, forcing the Pyu-zàw-hti myth into a secondary position.

Strengthening the Mahasammata Claim

Strengthening the mythological foundations of the dynasty did not solve everything. Indeed, Upper Burmese literati and Singu himself had taken substantial intellectual steps to strengthen the kingdom through the provision of a new, universal, royal lineage. However, plots against Singu continued, leading to Bò-daw-hpayà's seizure of the throne in 1782. Bò-daw-hpayà, however, faced similar challenges almost as soon as he ascended that throne. He thus needed additional props for the Kòn-baung kingship. Bò-daw-hpayà turned to the early Sudhamma monks and Lower Chind-

33. Nga Mi, "Rakhine Ra-zawin," 229a–229b.

34. Sangermano, *Burmese Empire*, 69.

win lay literati for answers. As discussed, Tun Nyo and Nyanabhivamsa had aided efforts to strengthen the position of Kòn-baung rulers in the areas of law and origin myths. The two men now encouraged Bò-daw-hpayà to look more closely at Brahmanic rites. While origin myths and legal texts strengthened the institution of kingship, Brahmanic rituals offered a means of legitimizing the immediate incumbent on the throne. This section examines the ways in which Lower Chindwin literati aided Bò-daw-hpayà in his efforts to remain on the throne, especially through the adoption of the text-based Muddha Beiktheik, which enhanced the sacredness of the consecration ritual of kingship.

Bò-daw-hpayà took the throne in February-March 1782.³⁵ As a usurper, Bò-daw-hpayà was concerned because Singu's supporters and Singu himself were still at large, presenting a potential threat to his possession of the throne. More worrying were other potential usurpers among the ranks of the men who had helped to put Bò-daw-hpayà in power. If Bò-daw-hpayà had reason for concern due to the events of 1782, he came to the throne already aware of how unstable a ruler's position was, an understanding developed from decades of life experience. Bò-daw-hpayà, now in his forties, had grown up through the eighteenth century's most turbulent and chaotic years. When in his youth, Upper Burma had been conquered by the Peguan rebels, the last king of the Restored Taung-ngu Dynasty was murdered, and his own father, Alaung-hpayà, had resurrected a Burmese kingdom through force of arms. In his twenties, he had seen the great invasions of Ayudhya, including its conquest by his elder brother Hsin-pyu-shin. In his thirties, he had led a relatively peaceful, luxurious life as a great lord in the early Kòn-baung court. Finally, he had witnessed Singu's controversial assumption of the throne, Singu's murder of some of his brothers and other close relatives, and, ultimately, his own exile. In short, Bò-daw-hpayà's world was one of uncertainty and threats, both overt and covert. His approach to kingship and the serious reforms he undertook, all worked toward stabilizing this world and securing his own personal safety.

The first major task facing Bò-daw-hpayà was to secure his position in the court and to eradicate discontented elements that might attempt to restore Singu or to place another king on the throne. He left in place some members of Singu's court whom he did not suspect of harboring loyalties to the dethroned king. The "Mi" chief minister, for example, retained his post. There were also many new faces, or newly aggrandized administra-

35. Paññāsami, *Sasanavamsa*, 134.

tors, in the higher positions of Bò-daw-hpayà's court. Bò-daw-hpayà appointed Maha-thi-ha-thu-ra as the chief of the Privy Council, the person who had supervised Maung Maung's execution became the most important among the two governors of Ava,³⁶ and Bò-daw-hpayà made the great scholar, Myat San, a governor.³⁷ Literati like Myat San, who had won the titles of Let-wè-naw-yahta and Let-wè-thon-dara during Alaung-hpayà's reign, supported and cemented Bò-daw-hpayà's rule through literature. Myat San, for example, composed a celebratory record (*mawgun*) in honor of Bò-daw-hpayà's coronation.³⁸

The literati took additional steps to secure the king's place on the throne from internal threats. Working through the Abhiraja myth, literati in Bò-daw-hpayà's reign attempted to strengthen the connection between the Kòn-baung kingship and Mahasammata. They also reworked the aforementioned *Manú-kye Dhammathat*. Composed during Alaung-hpayà's reign (in the 1750s), one member of the literati completed a new copy of this important text, substantially enlarged and more fully detailed, on 25 June 1782. The new material included, significantly, not only new chapters (3 and 16) but also the interpolation in the first chapter of some twenty-two lists detailing royal, as well as judicial, behavior.³⁹ As a result, an authoritative text supported, outlined, and expanded the legitimate role of the king, enhancing, at least in theory, the king's place at the apex of society.

Early in his reign, Bò-daw-hpayà also made his eldest son the heir apparent. Removal from the line of succession justifiably upset his two remaining brothers. Bò-daw-hpayà executed the youngest after his attempt to seize the throne and the elder sank into obscurity, leading "a miserable life, supported by the labour of his hands."⁴⁰ Bò-daw-hpayà had

36. Symes, *Account*, 98.

37. Ba Thein, "A Dictionary of Burmese Authors," 139. Another supporter, the young Viceroy of Pegu, was the son of a man who had remained loyal to the Bò-daw-hpayà when he was sent into exile by Singu. His mother had also "fostered" Bò-daw-hpayà's eldest son. In return, Bò-daw-hpayà awarded him the revenues of the town and district of "Meedee" and the title of *thakin*, hence he was known as "Meedee" Thakin. Symes, *Account*, 98.

38. Ba Thein, "Dictionary of Burmese Authors," 140.

39. Okudaira and Huxley, "Burmese Tract on Kingship," 248-51; Okudaira, "Serious Problem Caused by Printing of a Burmese Manuscript," 11-15. Unfortunately, the name of the compiler of this version remains unknown. Okudaira and Huxley, "Burmese Tract on Kingship," 252-53.

40. Sangermano, *Burmese Empire*, 69.

strengthened his position sufficiently to fend off two more attempts on the throne later in 1782. In the first attempt, Maha-thi-ha-thu-ra supported a conspiracy whose overt goals were to place on the throne one of Alaung-hpayà's illegitimate sons, although it appears probable that Maha-thi-ha-thu-ra really intended to take the throne for himself, following Bò-daw-hpayà's example in his handling of Maung Maung. Bò-daw-hpayà thus executed Maha-thi-ha-thu-ra. This was a major blow to Bò-daw-hpayà's already troubled mind. As Sangermano explains, "so terrified and troubled therewith was the new king . . . that never after did he put trust in man, no, not though he were his nearest kin. Then also did he begin his practice of changing daily his chamber and bed."⁴¹ A second attempt on the throne occurred on the night of 4 December 1782, when a man claiming to be the son of Maha-damá-ya-za-dí-patí, the last king of the Restored Taung-ngu Dynasty, stormed the palace with his supporters, although he was put down the following day and later captured and executed.⁴²

For a means of allaying his fears for the security of his throne, Bò-daw-hpayà turned to the Lower Chindwin literati for help with Brahmanic consecration rituals. Ryuji Okudaira has observed, for example, that among the early Kòn-baung rulers, the observance of "the most elaborate and complex" of the various Brahmanic consecration rituals, the Muddha Beiktheik, was initiated in the reign of Bò-daw-hpayà. So important was this most sacred of consecration rituals that Bò-daw-hpayà had this ritual performed twice, once in 1783 and again in 1784. Among Upper Burma's social elites, who would have been aware of the significance of the ritual, the repeated consecrations further strengthened their faith in the legitimacy of Bò-daw-hpayà's claims to the throne. The continued reliance of this king on Lower Chindwin literati was necessary because the complexity of the Muddha Beiktheik consecration ceremony required specialized Sanskrit ritual texts and literati who could translate and understand them. In 1782, Nyanabhivamsa translated one of these Sanskrit ritual texts into Burmese. The importance of such texts fed Bò-daw-hpayà's interest in obtaining additional texts from India and Bengal at least by the middle of 1783.⁴³

Over the course of four decades, the literati had mediated the move-

41. Ibid., 65.

42. Symes, *Account*, 99; Sangermano, *Burmese Empire*, 66.

43. Royal Order, 3 July 1783, 4.260; Okudaira, "Features of the Theravada Buddhist State Structure," 120–21; see also, J. S. Furnivall, "The Coronation of Burmese Kings," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 15.1 (1925): 142.

ment of ideas of kingly legitimation from Western to Upper Burma. The impact was important, as the position of Kòn-baung rulers became more secure. Succession disputes now occurred between royal claimants rather than between royal claimants and non-royalty. Bò-daw-hpayà perhaps benefited most of all, as he reigned for thirty-nine years, by far the longest reign of any Kòn-baung sovereign.

The mobilization by literati of the Mahasammata model also encouraged royal efforts to bring all of Burma under one universal ruler. Although the early Kòn-baung kings united Upper and Lower Burma, Western Burma (Arakan) remained outside of the Kòn-baung polity until Bò-daw-hpayà conquered it in 1784. Western Burma, secluded from the Irrawaddy Valley by a formidable mountain range, had sat as an independent kingdom within the greater Indian cultural matrix for over a millennium. As a result, the Mrauk-U court had the same kinds of court specialists (Brahmans), texts, and traditions the Kòn-baung court needed. Bò-daw-hpayà divided his invasion army into two parts, each under one of his sons, sending one by sea and the other by land over the Arakan Yoma Mountains, both meeting up again in Western Burma.⁴⁴ After a vigorous military campaign, Bò-daw-hpayà not only annexed Western Burma, but the Kòn-baung kings now became the first central Burmese dynasty to end permanently indigenous rule in Western Burma.⁴⁵

The influence of the Abhiraja myth was by no means sweeping or immediate. Its influence remained incomplete during the first few decades following 1781. The comprehensive examination of court culture offered in 1783 by Zei-yá-thin-hkaya in his *Introduction to the Golden Palace* (*Shwe-bon-ní-dàn*), for example, refers only to Pyu-zàw-hì with no mention of the Abhiraja myth.⁴⁶ Tun Nyo also does not mention the Abhiraja origin myth in his *Great New Chronicle* (1800), a massive and comprehensive

44. Sangermano, *The Burmese Empire*, 69, 70; Symes, *Account*, 102, 105.

45. Tin Naing Tò, *Kòn-baung-hset maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 1.1–10; Sangermano; *The Burmese Empire*, 70; Symes, *Account*, 108–9. In 1826, Arakan was removed from Burma, falling under British rule. It would later be reintegrated with Burma proper and never again enjoyed an independent political existence.

46. He died, like Singu, in 1782. Zei-yá-thin-hkaya, *Shwe-bon-ní-dàn*, 99–100; Silavamsa, *Zata-daw-pon Ya-zawin*, 23, 53. Again, the date for this text is controversial. Hla Tin, considering that it included material for King Nayawaya (r. 1671–1672), attributes this text to the reign of his younger brother, Min-yei Kyaw-din (r. 1673–1698), thus making it a late seventeenth century text. Silavamsa, *Zata-daw-pon Ya-zawin*, 1. Without more extensive corroboration than that offered here, however, this attribution is by itself unconvincing.

work on Burmese history. Neither does he include it in his biography of Alaung-hpayà, choosing instead to draw Alaung-hpayà's lineage directly from Pyu-zàw-hti.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, over time, the myth became the dominant origin myth in Burmese histories.⁴⁸ The myth entered the chronicle genre of central Burmese literature in 1785 with the *New Pagan Chronicle*.⁴⁹ Later, two Sudhamma monks, Tun Nyo's protégé (and fellow Sudhamma monk) Nyanabhivamsa and the Second Monywa *hsayadaw*, had no reservations. They included the myth in the main dynastic chronicle, the *Glass Palace Chronicle*.

47. Twin-thin-taik-wun Maha-si-thu, *Myanma Ya-zawin-thet*, vol. 1 (Rangoon: Mingala Press, 1968); idem, "Alaung-mìn-tayà-gyi Ayei-daw-bon," in *Alaung-hpayà Ayei-daw-bon hnasaung-dwè*, ed. Û Hlā Tin, (Rangoon, 1961), 153–233.

48. To point to one example, although Tun Nyo's account of Alaung-hpayà's life, as I have mentioned, focused exclusively on the Pyu-zàw-hti myth, in the 1920s, James G. Scott found a different palm-leaf account of Alaung-hpayà's life, which did tie Alaung-hpayà's lineage to the Abhiraja/Dhajaraja myth. J. G. Scott, *Burma: From the Earliest Times*, 3–4. Unfortunately, Scott does not provide any other bibliographic details.

49. Tin Ohn, "Modern Historical Writing in Burmese, 1724–1942," in *Historians of South East Asia*, ed. D. G. E. Hall (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 87. @xext:

chapter four

Monastic Reform

Eighteenth-century Burmese notions of kingship included the belief that the king emulated on the earthly plain the role of Lord Indra. Indra was the King of Tavatimsa, the realm of the gods, which sat atop the world's great central mountain known as Mount Meru or, in Burmese terminology, Mount Myinmo. Indra was absorbed into Burmese Buddhist belief as Lord Thagya, who headed the pantheon of Nats. Thagya was also said to have promised to Godama Buddha (in Kusunamara) that he would guard over the Religion and thus was given custodianship over Buddhism.¹ As Zei-yá-thin-hkaya explained in 1783, Bò-daw-hpayà's palace at Amarapura reflected the king's association with Thagya. When Thagya descended Mount Myinmo to watch over the residents of the world, his power spread out through a hole (*Thagya-pauk*). Bò-daw-hpayà also had such a hole (*mìn-hpon-pauk*) in the third level of the seven-tiered roofing (the symbolic "mountain") above his throne, through which he also was said to spread his power. Atop the throne was an image of Thagya, reminding the king to watch over the Religion, to "always govern lawfully," and to protect the good and punish the wicked in Kòn-baung society.² In Zei-yá-thin-hkaya's view, one shared by many Burmese of his time, the responsibilities of governing the state and maintaining the purity of the Religion (and monastic unity in doing so) were inextricably bound together in the

1. As Duroiselle explains, "Sakka, the Lord of Tavatimsa, takes a great interest in human affairs, and he is in heaven what the earthly king was in Burma, that is supreme, his presence as a tutelary, a protecting and advising deity in the transaction of state business and religious ceremonies was to be much desired; hence his presence over the Throne." Charles Duroiselle, *Guide to the Mandalay Palace* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1925), 24–25.

2. Zei-yá-thin-hkaya, *Shwe-bon-ni-dàn*, 6–8.

role of Burmese kingship. These were old views traceable in roughly the same form to the Pagan era.³

Perhaps inspired by such ideal models of the relationship between kings and religion, Burmese religious reforms from the 1780s are sometimes misunderstood as solely state directed. *Sasana* reform in Burmese history is viewed as a royal enterprise. In theory, the king of the law, or *dhammaraja*, was the earthly protector of the Religion. This is especially true of the attempted reforms that occurred during the reign of Bò-daw-hpayà. According to the prevailing historiography, Bò-daw-hpayà sought divinity by presenting himself as a kind of "fusion" of *cakravartin* and the coming fifth Buddha, Maitreya. Evidence cited to support this view includes Bò-daw-hpayà's calendrical reforms, his attempt to build Burma's largest pagoda (at Mingun), his assumption of the role of a hermit, and his purification of the monastic order. When the highest ecclesiastical authorities opposed his plans to declare himself the Maitreya, he purged them, favoring instead the *paramats*, a lay reform movement whose leaders appeared willing to accept his claims.⁴

The court could manipulate royal patronage of certain monasteries and could favor one sect over another with appointments of court religious officers. However, the strength of monastic autonomy was formidable. If state control stopped at the village gates, it also stopped on the moonstone tablets at the entrance of each monastic compound. Ferguson has correctly explained that royal orders and "defamatory monastic chronicles" give a misleading impression of the ability of the court to purge the monastic order of divergent takes on the Religion. In Ferguson's view, religious purges were a consequence of royal efforts to enhance a new king's role as a religious purifier by counteracting religious reforms taken under a predecessor. Thus, monks and sects who fell into disfavor in one reign, easily found themselves in the court and even holding the major ecclesiastical offices in the royal capital in the next. Thus, monastic groups deemed unorthodox or heretical never really disappeared because of royal disfavor; they bided their time until changes at the court, especially a turnover of kings, presented an opportunity to unseat their monastic rivals.⁵

If the Burmese king protected the Religion in theory, he was an outsider to most religious affairs in practice. Different actors were at work in both

instigating and carrying out these developments. Powerful monks who had asserted monastic autonomy even in the royal center also obstructed the royal hand. The court exercised an even more limited reach into rural Burma. Most of the early Kòn-baung kings focused on major military campaigns and court politics and do not seem to have expended much energy on monastic reform. Alaung-hpayà intended to ignore divisions within the monastic order until he had reunified the kingdom. Naung-daw-gyi, Hsin-pyu-shin, and Singu appear to have been scarcely concerned, leaving monastic cleavages to the judgment of ecclesiastical appointees, as discussed in chapter 1. It is only with Bò-daw-hpayà's reign that we find a significant and sustained attempt by the court to bring about a complete reform of the Religion. As we shall see, he failed, again due to the state's limited reach into society and its modest influence over monastic affairs.

The state's religious bureaucracy lacked the administrative capacity to enforce decisions made about the Religion in the court, by either the king or the chief of religious affairs. The chief of religious affairs did head a pyramid of religious officers, consisting of the eight- to twelve-member Sudhamma Council of monastic elders in the royal capital and a three-tiered hierarchy of *gaing-gyoks*, *gaing-ouks*, and *gaing-dauks* with increasingly specialized jurisdictions throughout the rest of the kingdom. However, these officers acted as the monastic judiciary, deciding cases brought before them. At the royal capital, two civil officers, the ecclesiastical censor (*maha-dan-wun*) and the supervisor of ecclesiastical lands (*wutmye-wun*) together served in a way as the chief of religious affair's only meaningful executive arm. The supervisor of ecclesiastical lands managed lists of monastic lands and pagoda slaves and the ecclesiastical censor managed the lists that every monastery was obliged to send to the royal court containing information on the names of monks, the date of their ordination, and the texts read and taught. The ecclesiastical censor was theoretically empowered to enforce the religious decisions of the chief of religious affairs and his subordinates, but he did not head a comparable chain of officers outside of the royal capital.⁶ Thus, the ecclesiastical censor's reach was limited: while he could go out into the countryside to enforce a particular decision, he could only handle one case at a time.

In theory, the ecclesiastical censor could order local officials to enforce

3. Aung-Thwin, *Pagan*, 31.

4. John P. Ferguson, "The Symbolic Dimensions of the Sangha," (PhD diss., Ithaca: Cornell University, 1975), 200–202, 205–6.

5. *Ibid.*, 187–88.

6. Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 4, 5; Donald E. Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 16–17.

religious decisions made in the royal capital. Though appointed by the court, such officials were hesitant to take on local monastic elders whose position in local society was frequently of longer standing and more respected than their own. Indeed, many local officials were significant patrons of religious establishments. Enforcing local monastic change, even should they have had the strength to do so, would have put into doubt the merit they had accrued from their own religious patronage. Given the frequent changes in court purification edicts, it also made sense to simply do nothing and wait for a change in the monastic status quo at the court. After all, even at the royal center, kings frequently recalled within a few days edicts that banished or otherwise punished dissident monks. As Donald Smith observes, "the hand of ecclesiastical authority rested on them very lightly indeed in normal times."⁷ Monks in outlying monasteries simply resisted as best they could adverse decision making from the royal center.

Religious Reform under Bò-daw-hpayà

Studies of Kòn-baung Burma often attribute the major religious reforms of Bò-daw-hpayà's reign to the king alone.⁸ Such a view grants the throne an unreasonable capacity for practical control over both the Religion and the governance of the kingdom. Although all-powerful in theory, the throne was only as strong as the loyalties of those who surrounded the king. Some of these men, including Tun Nyo and Nyanabhivamsa, were allowed considerable latitude in pursuing their own agendas, so long as they did not conflict with royal interests. Like these two men, Bò-daw-hpayà was also a product of the Lower Chindwin Valley, at least in part. Unlike his father and elder brothers, he was no warrior. At no time did he personally lead his armies into battle, deputing sons or trusted commanders instead. Over the course of the early modern era, Burmese administrative cycles increasingly demonstrated that men who grew up within the court and cultivated less martial qualities succeeded strong military men who founded dynasties. Bò-daw-hpayà grew up in the Lower Chindwin Valley, where he held his appanage of Badon, and local tutors instructed

7. Donald E. Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 16.

8. John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), 68–73; Thant Myint-U, *Making of Modern Burma*, 13–17, 51, 58; Htin Aung, *History of Burma*, 186–90; Harvey, *History of Burma*, 265–94; this is also the main thrust of the examination in Koenig, *Burmese Polity*.

him. Later, Singu exiled Bò-daw-hpayà from the court and the latter led a meager existence in Sagaing deprived of wealth. Even then, Bò-daw-hpayà maintained his ties to the Lower Chindwin literati.

Considering the king as one of their number, the religious developments of Bò-daw-hpayà's reign appear to be more broadly literati-driven, rather than simply royally directed. The literati, particularly those among the monkhood, responded to the spread of literacy and both popular and "corrupt" texts by using textual authority as the basis for hostile actions in factional disputes during the long reign of King Bò-daw-hpayà.

Nearly all religious confrontations of this period revolved around the validity of copies of the texts of the Pali canon and their interpretation. Ultimately, when he confronted Sudhamma monastic leadership in 1812, Bò-daw-hpayà took the extreme steps of sacking his chief ecclesiastical officers and attempting to force Sudhamma monks to seek re-ordination without the study of the texts that had been relied upon during the Sudhamma Reformation. In order to justify this move, Bò-daw-hpayà rejected the heritage of Sudhamma teachings and questioned their interpretation of the Pali canon by claiming that the copies of the canonical texts they relied on were invalid because of copying errors. Although the demonstration of textual authority and the authenticity of their own copies of canonical and other Buddhist texts had been central to the emergence of the Sudhamma monks and, through them, the Ayoun faction, throughout the eighteenth century, at no time were the debates so intense, and the stakes so high, as they were in Bò-daw-hpayà's reign. At a critical moment, the chief of religious affairs, Nyanabhivamsa, was defrocked by Bò-daw-hpayà because of their conflict over the correct interpretation of the Pali texts.

Demonstrating the importance of the Sudhamma monks and their lay supporters, these new court-directed religious reforms failed miserably. A humbled throne thereupon surrendered to the social reality of supreme Sudhamma textual authority in matters regarding the texts of the Pali canon. Nyanabhivamsa's pupils were appointed successively, with the exception of one relatively brief period, as the chiefs of religious affairs from the king's death in 1819. Ultimately, in 1831, the throne, under Bò-daw-hpayà's grandson, would again turn to Nyanabhivamsa, in his role as a member of the literati, to reestablish the image of a unified monastic order protected by a beneficent throne through his compilation of a history of Buddhist monasticism in Burma.

Nyanabhivamsa, Tun Nyo, and Bò-daw-hpayà worked together on asserting state control over the monastic order. However, each also had

special goals. Nyanabhivamsa sought to reform the monastic order according to Sudhamma teachings and keep it in the strictest adherence to the Vinaya rules. This meant not only targeting "lax" monks, but also those who in his view misinterpreted these rules, especially the Atins (the "one shoulder" monks). Tun Nyo, like many early Sudhamma monks, bore a special animosity toward the Atins. Nevertheless, more generally, he was a textual purist and fitted the image of a strict disciplinarian when it came to historical accuracy. Furthermore, he obviously would benefit from developments that strengthened the position of his pupil, Bò-daw-hpayà. Bò-daw-hpayà also sought in religious centralization a way of solving the deeper theological questions he pursued regarding the correct practice of the Religion. In doing so, he eventually would seek recognition of his claims to be the Maitreya Buddha, ideas he may have been toying with silently in the early years of his reign. However self-interested these goals were, they had enough common ground to sustain their joint efforts to effect centrally defined religious orthodoxy by attacking the basis of factional dissent. The main aspects of this period of religious reform included documenting the economic basis of the monastic order and thus stemming the flow of royal manpower and agricultural reserves to tax-free status, establishing a single, undeniably authoritative version of the canonical texts, and establishing a single, invariable, calendrical system.

Tun Nyo was not only the king's lay teacher, the former Lower Chindwin monk guided him on monastic matters as well, at least during the early years of his reign when he was in the process of making major ecclesiastical appointments and setting the tone of religious reform for the years ahead. Tun Nyo also took charge of the task of gathering and recording inscriptions from monastic estates. Inscriptions that defined monastic lands were gathered and brought to the royal capital where they would be surveyed and kept at the royal center as a reference for resolving monastic disputes. Based on the six hundred stone inscriptions he had gathered and an analysis of various historical texts, some procured from Western Burma, Tun Nyo compiled a massive and revised chronicle of Burmese history that took note of discrepancies in the chronicle left by Kalà seventy years earlier.⁹

As for Nyanabhivamsa, this early Sudhamma monk had become famous in the Lower Chindwin for his knowledge of Pali and other texts. It probably helped as well that his parents were local "big" people with

9. Although Tun Nyo compiled this text sometime between 1798 and 1801, most authorities mistakenly claim that the elderly scholar died in 1792, likely confusing him with another minister.

wealth that his mother directed into patronage of a local monastery. Tun Nyo had brought Nyanabhivamsa, who would later emerge as the chief of religious affairs, to Bò-daw-hpayà's attention in 1781. The king had heard about a young monk from his teacher's village who was famous for his knowledge of texts, and Tun Nyo informed him that it was Nyanabhivamsa, whereupon the governor of Taung-bek, Mìn-gyaw-shwe-daung, was dispatched to bring Nyanabhivamsa back to the capital.¹⁰ Reportedly, Nyanabhivamsa brought with him eighty disciples, apparently all from Maungdaung.¹¹ When he arrived, the king gave him a new title, a monastery, and put him in charge of the royal copies of the canonical texts. As mentioned earlier, Bò-daw-hpayà had a special interest in Nyanabhivamsa. The king had not yet been ritually consecrated, and Bò-daw-hpayà immediately had Nyanabhivamsa set about translating or interpreting a Sanskrit manual for the Brahmanic consecration ritual, entitled the *Rajabhiseka*, into Burmese, with the aid of the court Brahmins.¹²

Both Tun Nyo and Nyanabhivamsa, already at work with the religious inscriptions, translating the major treatise necessary for the royal consecration ceremony, and providing advice concerning Bò-daw-hpayà's initial approaches to religious reform, wielded considerable influence on the king. They also appear to be the ones who convinced Bò-daw-hpayà to take on the Atins. Among the early Sudhamma monks, the Maungdaung monks, as the former monk Tun Nyo had once been, bore a special grudge against the Atins. In Alaung-hpayà's reign, when Atula was primate, two Maungdaung monks had become important dissidents against court-supported Atin practices. These two monks were thus brought to the capital and then banished to a "distant" place, possibly after interrogation by Atula. It may be the case that Tun Nyo, formerly a Sudhamma monk who became a layman about this time, was defrocked during this period of religious reform, but if he was, this information has not been included in the available histories or documents. As Bò-daw-hpayà's tutor, Tun Nyo taught the prince that Atin practices were incorrect, that they did not agree with the canonical texts, and that, by contrast, the practices of the Ayoun faction, of which the early Sudhamma monks were a part, were in the strictest conformity with the rules laid out in the Vinaya Code.¹³

10. Tin Hswei, *Tha-thana-wuntha Dipani*, 251; Û Sàñ Maung (Monywa), *Maungdaung Wàn-kyin Kyè-moun-pyin* (Yangon: Pali Paragu, 1989), 51-52.

11. *Taung-yin Hsè-pyinnya Thamaing*, (Yangon: Gyàn-ma-yè-wun-gyi-tana, 1978), 78.

12. Sàñ Maung, *Maungdaung Wàn-kyin Kyè-moun-pyin*, 52; Paññāsami, *Sasanavamsa*, 135.

13. Tin Hswei, *Tha-thana-wuntha Dipani*, 215, 250.

The Sudhamma Reformation

The Sudhamma monks had won court recognition of their authority regarding the Pali canon under Singu, but this victory, as indicated in Singu's weakly enforced edict forbidding Atin practices, did not in itself establish their control over monastic affairs. Earlier kings had issued similar edicts, sometimes in favor of the Ayouns and sometimes in favor of the Atins, many times before. This changed when Bò-daw-hpayà took the throne. On the advice of Tun Nyo, the new king chose not to elect a single chief of religious affairs, but instead to create a Council of Elders, known as the Sudhamma Council. A royal edict dated 3 June 1782, mentions that, at first, there were four monks appointed simultaneously as the chiefs of religious affairs, with one bestowed with overall authority among the four.¹⁴ As Mendelson points out, however, the king then added an additional eight monks to help the first four, leaving a Council of twelve members and not eight as the prevailing historiography had until then generally supposed.¹⁵

The appointments for these posts placed the Sudhamma monks in clear control, filling eleven of the twelve seats on the Sudhamma Council, including all four of the main seats. The four chiefs of religious affairs included Gunalankara (the Manle *hsayadaw*, also known as Gunamuninda), Gunasiri (the Min-O *hsayadaw*), Nandamala (the Sonda *hsayadaw*), and Jagara (the Min-ywa *hsayadaw*), all Sudhamma monks. The eight assistant members added to the Council included Shin Dhammadara (the Kato *hsayadaw*), Manimala, Nyana (the Hsin-dè *hsayadaw*, but originally from Ngayano), Nyanabhivamsa, Dhammabinanda, Vara (the Mondaw *hsayadaw*), and Nandamala (the Salin *hsayadaw*, but a native of Pakàn-gyi), all seven of these monks being Lower Chindwin Sudhamma monks, as well as the Shwedaung *hsayadaw*, who was not a member of their textual community, or from the Lower Chindwin, but had been allied with the Sudhamma monks in the Ayoun faction in earlier episodes of the robe controversy.¹⁶ The Sudhamma monks now had the

14. Royal Order, 3 June 1782, 4.236–37; Tin Hswei, *Tha-thana-wuntha Dipani*, 250; Sān Maung, *Maungdaung Wān-kyin Kyè-moun-pyin*, 54.

15. Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 71; for a Burmese Buddhist history that accepts only eight, see Shwe-hintha *hsayadaw*, *Shwe-gyin-nikaya-thathana-win* (Rangoon: n.p., 1963), 93.

16. Mei-hti *hsayadaw*, *Vamsa Dipani*, 147; Maha-damā-thin-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yá sa-dān*, 198–99; Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 71.

administrative support necessary to pursue their evasive monastic opponents.

The Sudhamma Council's first act was to move against Atula and the Atins, who had successfully ignored Singu's edict. On 3 June 1782, the same day that the king had installed the four new chiefs of religious affairs, he issued an edict ordering Atin leaders to accept the Ayoun teachings. Some Atins paid lip service to the Sudhamma Council, if begrudgingly.¹⁷ Atula and other Atins, however, continued to teach their practices.

While the Sudhamma Council was authorized to act regarding most monastic affairs, difficult matters were to be tried before the membership of the Religious Texts Library (the *pitaka-taik-daw*). In April 1784, Atula was summoned before this body for interrogation concerning his practices and whatever claims he had of their basis in the canonical texts. Shin Obasa (also a Maungdaung *hsayadaw*), Shin Parama (the Hsà-lin-gyi *hsayadaw*), Shin Kalyana (the Ngà-ywa *hsayadaw*), and several other Sudhamma monks then questioned the beleaguered monk repeatedly. Unsatisfied, the Ayoun monks expanded the inquisition and ordered the Council of Ministers to summon Atula's disciples to the Religious Texts Library for interrogation as well.¹⁸

The wily Tun Nyo was able to arrange his own appointment as the judge of a newly arranged *Vinaya* court.¹⁹ From the beginning, the inquisition amounted to a personal assault on Atula. The Religious Texts Library elders attempted to bring out into the open the reasons for Atula's banishment from Hsin-pyu-shin's court a decade earlier. They claimed that Atula had been exiled to the forests at that time after the Ayouns had petitioned for his defrockment. Despite this, he had continued to organize the Atins.²⁰ In his own defense, Atula cited the *Sula-gandi* as his authority for the practice of wearing monastic robes over the right shoulder. In the debate that followed, the inquisitors asked Atula to show them the actual leaf of the book that backed his interpretation of the *Vinaya*. When he did so, the Religious Texts Library elders challenged the authenticity of the text. According to Atula, a Sri Lankan elder named Mogallana wrote the text and the *Pitaka-yakkhanagandha*, brought by Buddhaghosa from Sri Lanka, listed this work, confirming its orthodoxy. In the *Treatise on the*

17. Royal Order, 30 May 1783, 4.252; Royal Order, 3 June 1782, 4.236–37; Paññasami, *Sasanavamsa*, 134–35.

18. Royal Order, 21 April 1784, 4.323; 23 April 1784, 4.325; 25 April 1784, 4.326.

19. Ferguson, "Symbolic Dimensions of the Burmese Sangha," 197.

20. Royal Order, 21 April 1783, 4.323; 23 April 1784, 4.325; 25 April 1784, 4.326.

Religion, Nyanabhivamsa claims that the investigators caught Atula in his defense of the authenticity of the text. According to Nyanabhivamsa, the Religious Texts Library elders asked Atula to see that text as well and were able to prove that no such book had been handed down.²¹ The conclusion was that Atula or an Atin accomplice had produced a fraudulent book.

Whether or not the case against Atula was actually proven in this debate is unclear, but it does not seem that he would have won the debate in any event. The Sudhamma elders probably decided the fate of the inquisition of Atula and other Atins before the debate had begun. The proceedings were one part of a campaign against Atula and his followers, not a fair investigation of the shoulder debate. Predictably, Bò-daw-hpayà accepted the decision of his teacher and in April 1784, he issued royal edicts ordering the entire monastic order to follow Ayoun practices, the banishment of Atula and some of his disciples separately to different forests for preaching a false doctrine, and the defrocking of other Atins.²² Some accounts suggest that Atula received especially harsh treatment, being taken down the Irrawaddy, stripped naked and caged, and ridiculed at each boat landing.²³ This represented a final victory for the Ayouns, especially for the Sudhamma monks, regarding the robe controversy. Although there were some Atin holdouts, continued Sudhamma control over monastic affairs, with strong enforcement on the part of the throne, meant that these reluctant monks would be hunted down and rooted out. The controversy emerged again in 1799 when Shin Inda-sarà, a forest-dwelling monk, allegedly compiled a new text, the *Gàrudama-gambirà-hmat-su*, using the *Sula-gandī* as his reference. Again, Bò-daw-hpayà backed the order against Atin practices with force, ruling against Inda-sarà on 6 July 1799, having the monk expelled from his monastery, and condemning him to wear the white robes of shame. The king also issued a royal edict commanding the collection and burning of all copies of both texts.²⁴

The Sudhamma emphasis on the correct interpretation of Vinaya rules through careful textual analysis and comparison was adopted by the throne. The king, for example, devoted an almost excessive focus on the minute details of the arrangement, administration, and functions of the

21. Paññasami, *Sasanavamsa*, 138–39.

22. Ibid., 144; Royal Order, 25 April 1784, 4.327. Other *hsayadaws* in the Religious Texts Library, however, thought this punishment was too severe and persuaded the king to amend the punishment, although the monks remained defrocked. Royal Order, 25 April 1784, 4.328.

23. Ferguson, "Symbolic Dimensions of the Burmese Sangha," 197–98.

24. Royal Order, 6 July 1799, 5.636

Religious Texts Library, and expanded its facilities and personnel. Here, authoritative versions of the canonical texts would be compiled to resolve, finally, disputes over textual interpretations. Nyanabhivamsa and Dhammabinanda (the First Bagaya *hsayadaw*) were appointed as chief editors along with fifteen other monks, supported by a staff of thirty assistant editors (all monks). The library was under the administration of the ecclesiastical censor. On 30 June 1783, a royal edict commanded him to inform the editors and assistant editors that they should produce better edited copies of the Pali canon. The king increased the editorial staff the following year, with the number raised to twenty chief editors (*sa-gyī-poukko-sangha*), forty secondary editors (*sa-dī-poukko-sangha*), and forty assistant editors (*sa-mā-poukko-sangha*). Now, the editors were also to meet four times per month and were kept under tight state scrutiny and regimentation. At the same time, royal edicts stipulated that copies of the canonical texts should be made from authoritative copies made in 1805 and kept in the royal libraries at Amarapura and Mingun. The main reason was concern over errors in copying. One royal order in March 1807 complained that new material had been inserted into the Burmese translations of Pali texts, either purposefully or accidentally. The king thus ordered monks to check over the texts carefully until they had rectified all of the errors.²⁵

The king and the Sudhamma monks also sought to standardize textual date referencing and the observance of religious days according to a new calendar. The cultural heterogeneity in Burma had brought with it an innumerable host of calendars and systems of measuring time. Even more problematic were Western Burmese texts whose dating sometimes differed substantially from those of Irrawaddy Valley texts. Moreover, Bò-daw-hpayà became concerned that the Burmese system of time was given to vagaries and that a new system of time was needed, one that was "permanent and unvarying."²⁶

Nyanabhivamsa and the Expansion of the Sudhamma Reformation

Nyanabhivamsa had spent the early years of the Sudhamma Reformation working with court Brahmins on Sanskrit texts, expanding and refining

25. Royal Order, 30 June 1783, 4. 257; Royal Order, 5 July 1784, 4.359; Royal Order, 30 July 1806, 5.940; Royal Order, 22 March 1807, 6.351.

26. Symes, *Account*, 333.

the activities of the Sudhamma Council and the Religious Texts Library, writing grammars, glossaries, and sub-commentaries, and maintaining his connections to Lower Chindwin monasteries. He did so on a massive scale; in one case, he donated a library of almost 8,600 religious manuscripts to the library built south of the Myagun-daung pagoda near his home village.²⁷ At a time when control over monastic affairs was firmly in the hands of the Sudhamma monks, who viewed with disapproval the circumvention of careful scrutiny of the Pali canon in favor of "oral traditions," Nyanabhivamsa's textual activities must have earned him a good reputation. Moreover, through his friend and fellow villager, Tun Nyo, Nyanabhivamsa could maintain close connections with the throne, having already proven himself invaluable regarding the king's Brahmanic coronation ritual.

It was thus probably no great surprise that Nyanabhivamsa, although only thirty-five years old at the time, was appointed by the king as the chief of the Sudhamma Council and as chief of religious affairs in 1788.²⁸ Nyanabhivamsa presided over the establishment of more vigorous Vinaya examinations in 1791 and a standardization of the curriculum of monastic schools, including the strictly defined methodologies regarding memorization and recitation favored by the Sudhamma monks. Nyanabhivamsa dispatched "reform monks" throughout the kingdom to reordain monks who accepted the new Sudhamma orthodoxy established through the state's chief ecclesiastical council, and to defrock monks who opposed the changes. As Patrick Pranke argues, the centralization of ordination procedure represented the most important change of the Sudhamma Reformation, as ordination now had to take place under Sudhamma auspices, preventing monks who did not submit to the council from ordaining new disciples thus "guarantee[ing] that all lineages other than the Sudhamma would go extinct after one generation."²⁹ Through these efforts the Sudhamma monks themselves were transformed from a regionally-based community of monks to the core of a new kingdom-wide fraternity that also, through the new educational requirements, were brought closer in line with Sudhamma textual practices.

The Sudhamma success, however, brought about a conflict between Nyanabhivamsa and other monastic leaders on the one hand and the king

on the other. Observers in the 1790s already noted that Bò-daw-hpayà was unhappy with Nyanabhivamsa's interpretations of the Pali canon. Ultimately, in 1812, Bò-daw-hpayà attempted to exert complete authority over religious reform and forced Nyanabhivamsa to be defrocked.³⁰ The years in between witnessed the growing tension between the king and Nyanabhivamsa due partly to personal friction. Nyanabhivamsa, for example, had been bold in his dealings with the king and attempted to interfere with the throne in matters that the latter felt did not concern the former. On one occasion, Nyanabhivamsa is said to have cautioned Bò-daw-hpayà not to engage in warfare with Siam, although Bò-daw-hpayà ignored the prelate's warning.

In matters of the religion, however, Nyanabhivamsa persevered, at least in the short term. One issue Nyanabhivamsa refused to concede to the king was the latter's attempts to have himself recognized as the fifth Buddha of the present world cycle. This Buddha, Maitreya, was to appear at the end of the five thousand years of the Religion at which time he would establish a new dispensation. Alaung-hpayà and other Burmese kings had on occasion claimed to be embryo Buddhas and it was thus not unprecedented for Bò-daw-hpayà to do the same. Nyanabhivamsa refused to accept Bò-daw-hpayà's claims, leading to a virtual showdown in the late 1790s between the chief of religious affairs and the throne. As Sangermano, who lived at Burma during this time, explains:

[Bò-daw-hpayà] held various conferences with the most considerable and learned Talapoins, in which he endeavored to persuade them that the 5000 years assigned for the observance of the law of Godama were elapsed, and that he himself was the God who was to appear after that period, and to abolish the ancient law in substituting his own. But to his great mortification many of the Talapoins undertook to demonstrate the contrary; and this, combined with his love of power and his impatience under the denial of the luxuries of the seraglio, quickly disabused him of his godhead, and drove him back to his palace.³¹

For the moment, the Sudhamma leadership blocked Bò-daw-hpayà, but he would try to control religious reform again in the 1810s. This delay was in large part due to the near collapse of his kingdom in the interim. Bò-daw-hpayà's stature as an Asoka-like king, a universal Buddhist ruler,

27. Langham-Carter, "Four Notables of the Lower Chindwin," 338.

28. Pranke, "The 'Treatise on the Lineage of Elders,'" 9.

29. *Ibid.*, 9, 10.

30. Sangermano, *Burmese Empire*, 75.

31. *Ibid.*

eroded due to two main problems during the 1805 to 1812 period that fed into each other to produce a disastrous period in Burmese history. First, Bò-daw-hpayà had locked himself into a series of wars with Siam from which he could not extricate himself. Having committed himself to the campaigns and failed, he could not as a *cakravartin* stop his campaigns without undercutting the royal legitimacy gained from this claim. Thus, he continued to drain his kingdom of manpower and agricultural resources.³² The second problem, a major famine, was even more damaging to Bò-daw-hpayà's image as a just king as well as to overall Kòn-baung strength and stability. Almost a century afterward, Burmese cultivators remembered the "Great Famine" (*maha-thayaw-gyi*) of 1805–1812 as the famine, for it was "the only one that lives in the memory of the people."³³ Years of drought from 1802 initiated this famine, but it worsened because of court revenue and manpower demands. To avoid Bò-daw-hpayà's increased taxation and military drafts for his campaigns in Siam, cultivators had abandoned the towns and villages in the interior and hid in the wilderness.³⁴ The numbers of royal servicemen dropped tremendously and rural debt reached its largest upsurge in the history of the dynasty, if the number of debt contracts is any guide.³⁵ Whatever the cause—and there were probably many contributing factors simultaneously at work—the agricultural lands abandoned during this famine then lapsed back into jungle. In

32. B. R. Pearn, ed. "A Burma Diary of 1810," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 27.3 (1937): 290; F. C. Owens, *Burma Gazetteer: Pokokku District*, vol. A (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1913), 120; A. Williamson, *Burma Gazetteer: Shwebo District*, vol. A (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1929), 30; Charles Paton, "Historical and Statistical Sketch of Arakan," *Asiatic Researches* 16 (1828): 368; W. A. White, *A Political History of the Extraordinary Events Which Led to the Burmese War* (London: W. Sams, 1827), 72, 74, 75, 79–83; R. S. Wilkie, *Burma Gazetteer: The Yamethin District*, vol. A (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1934), 168; John Canning, quoted in Koenig, *Burmese Polity*, 35.

33. Williamson, *Burma Gazetteer*, 70; William A. Hertz, *Report on the Settlement Operations in the Magwe District, Season 1897–1903*, (Rangoon: British Burma Press, 1903), 6. The former gives 1811–1816, while the latter gives a somewhat vaguer date that could be interpreted as 1803.

34. Pearn, "Burma Diary of 1810," 293; Koenig, *Burmese Polity*, 33.

35. Teruko Saito, "Rural Monetization and Land-mortgage Thet-kayits in Kon-baung Burma," in *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea 1750–1792*, ed. Anthony Reid, 158–59, 179 (London: Houndmills, 1997).

some districts, agricultural land was not fully returned to cultivation over twenty years later, in 1835.³⁶

Bò-daw-hpayà attributed the blame for the kingdom's souring condition to some of the higher ecclesiastical officers in 1812. The king summoned Nyanabhivamsa and other leading monks to Mingun, where he complained about growing divisions within the monastic order and charged the monastic leadership with responsibility for continued factional cleavage. The king forced Nyanabhivamsa and other Sudhamma leaders to be defrocked and leave the monastic order. Another monk, Shin Lakà, was also defrocked for having continued to keep accounts for two monks who resisted the court. The king ordered Dhammabinanda, who had more directly "resisted" him, to wear the white robes of shame. The ecclesiastical censor then ordered the circulation of Dhammabinanda through outlying areas before returning him to his home village in the Lower Chindwin.³⁷ Less high-ranking monks were banished to the forests. Again, however, the court found that executing this order was too difficult. Instead, orders were given that the lesser monks were not to be called upon to perform religious rites and were to be given no sustenance. Because of this order, foreign observers tell us that numerous monks abandoned the monastic order or sought refuge in outlying villages:

The second object of the King's attention is the persecution or rather devastation of the Talapoins. About the middle of October, he compelled His own Head Chaplain and several of the Chiefs to abandon the order. As to the rest [h]e ordered them to be conducted to the confines of the kingdom and banished forever. But as difficulties occurred in the execution of this order, it was soon [turned] into a prohibition of supplying them with provisions or lending them any assistance under pain of losing a hand . . . On the publication of his order numbers of Talapoins quitted the order and others fled into the villages, so that at present not one is to be seen in the city which formerly contained ten thousand. Whether the late order will be enforced in the villages I do not know.³⁸

36. Wilkie, *Burma Gazetteer*, 10, 130.

37. Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 3:132–33. "Bodaw Hpayà Ayu Wada," in *Royal Order*, 6.391.

38. Reverend Don Luis Grondona to Canning, 2 November 1812, included in Canning to Adama, 29 October 1813, *Bengal Political Consultations*, P/120/4, doc. 25.

Grumbling began among other monks as well. Although at first Bò-daw-hpayà ignored the problem, increasing numbers of monks followed the lead of the dissenting monks. Bò-daw-hpayà then ordered a purge of these monks, having them defrocked and even beaten. Other monks went into hiding or rebelled.³⁹

Bò-daw-hpayà now proceeded to rebuild the monastic order from the ground up. He cited a passage from the *Anagata-bhaya Sutta* which instructed that monks should live in a forest on their own, not accompanied by any other monks, and far away from human settlement. Monks who could not live in this way were to leave the monastic order. When the monks were re-ordained, they had to sit before the image of the Sandamuni Buddha and recite the three refuges (Buddha, *Dharma*, and *Sangha*). Those lay donors who wished to provide these monks "with shelter" were required to build forest monasteries two to three hundred *ta* (a flexible unit of measure that could be equivalent to four, seven, or ten cubits) apart. Some monks indeed submitted, disrobed, submitted to the new ordination, and took up residence in the new forest monasteries.⁴⁰

Although Bò-daw-hpayà was able to support or defrock monks in the royal capital, his efforts to control the monastic order outside of the royal capital were insufficient. The problem faced by Bò-daw-hpayà was that monastery heads, especially those with strong factional affiliations, continued to resist royal edicts that worked to their detriment. Although the monks allowed the king his theoretical rights regarding the religion and were more than willing to accept his patronage, monastic support proved more problematic when the king actually tried to change the monastic order in practice. Authority in religious affairs was thus a symbolic role of the kingship, but one that could not be asserted in practice without the support of at least some important members of the monastic order.

From 1816, Bò-daw-hpayà again changed his approach to religious reform.⁴¹ The Kòn-baung state had still found itself incapable of controlling society completely, especially outside the royal capital. As Bò-daw-hpayà himself observed, it was hard to force people in outlying areas to comply with his sweeping edicts. He thus cancelled all of his earlier edicts on the religion. This also involved canceling his instructions on the way to interpret the canonical texts.⁴² Bò-daw-hpayà now compared himself to

39. "Bodaw Hpayà Ayu Wada," in Royal Order, 6.391–92.

40. Royal Order, 25 August 1812, 7.299; Tin, *Myan-ma-mìn Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 3.131.

41. Tin, *Myan-ma-mìn Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 3.133.

42. *Ibid.*, 129.

King Tha-lun who had allowed, as he would now, all monks to practice Buddhism in whatever manner they liked. Now, the Burmese people were free to build monasteries and provide patronage for any monastic sect they wished.⁴³ To justify his reversal, Bò-daw-hpayà developed a revisionist view of Burmese religious history based on his reinterpretation of the historical and textual basis of the development of Buddhism in Burma from the beginning of the Pagan era. According to Bò-daw-hpayà, in the eleventh century, King Anaw-rahta had cultivated a belief in *arahants* in which a complete ordination ritual, informed by a Pali text and the Nyattisatutta rite, was fundamental. As Bò-daw-hpayà claimed, Anaw-rahta was interested in defeating the teachings of a rival sect. To do so, he created a false orthodoxy, promoting the copies of the canonical texts he brought from Lower Burma as authentic and correct. The Anaw-rahta fabrication was then wrongly adopted and promoted as orthodoxy by the Pagan state and its successors. However, in Bò-daw-hpayà's own view, there was no single correct teaching, as demonstrated by the heterogeneous interpretations of Buddhism stubbornly observed by monks and laymen throughout his kingdom, in spite of his reform edicts. Thus, Bò-daw-hpayà now shifted the state's attention away from the suppression of factional disputes, allowing all interpretations to co-exist and permitting lay donors to provide patronage to any monasteries they wished. Previously existing examinations were also reestablished.⁴⁴ The Sudhamma Reformation would be more fully reestablished a few years later, with the king's death in 1819.

Writing the History of the Religion

Later, returned to supreme monastic authority, the Sudhamma monks again proved how useful they could be to the enhancement of the aura of the throne. When Ba-gyi-daw came to the throne in 1819, he inherited the problems left by Bò-daw-hpayà's drastic religious measures. The monks were more divided than they had ever been and the image of positive royal intervention in religious affairs had been seriously damaged in the eyes of both monks and the lay community. Ba-gyi-daw was not in a position to initiate any major reforms himself, as he also inherited the problems on the northwestern frontier with British Bengal, problems that resulted in

43. Royal Order, 7 August 1817, 7.390.

44. Tin, *Myan-ma-mìn Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 3.134–35.

the outbreak of the First Anglo-Burmese War in 1824. Christian missionaries were soon able to use areas of Burma acquired by the British in 1826 as a secure base to expand the scope of Christian proselytization activities among the Burmese. Ba-gyi-daw appears to have believed that the court needed a history of the Religion that could provide a reference point for religious orthodoxy in Burma. In 1831, Ba-gyi-daw requested that the defrocked Nyanabhivamsa help in the matter.⁴⁵

After defrocking Nyanabhivamsa, Bò-daw-hpayà had retained him in his service as a layman, the move probably intended as compensation for his removal from the monastic order.⁴⁶ Nyanabhivamsa, now an interior minister entitled Min-gyi Thiri-maha-nanda-thin-gyan, remained an influential member of the court until his death in the early 1830s, mainly because of his knowledge of a wide range of texts. He would contribute to the Kòn-baung state chronicle, the *Glass Palace Chronicle* and, again, compose an important Buddhist history of Burma. Regarding the latter work, Nyanabhivamsa wrote a history that cleansed from the narrative events and elements that would appear to be unfavorable to the Kòn-baung state. Further, the historical revisionism of Sudhamma monastic writers presented the unity of Burma centered on that court as part of the normal order of things, rather than as one possibility among several (the Peguan court, for example, had achieved the alternative of a Lower Delta centered polity in 1751–1752 when it briefly integrated Upper and Lower Burma under its control). The *Treatise on the Religion*, as was discussed in chapter 1, has multiple layers, one of which was the history of the Sudhamma monks and Nyanabhivamsa's monastic lineage in particular. On another level, it is a historical narrative of Burmese Buddhism. For the latter project, Nyanabhivamsa followed the approach of his Sudhamma contemporary, Shin Manimala (the Mei-hti *hsayadaw*), in downplaying the importance of Western Burma and Lower Delta monks during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There is no mention of Western Burma in Nyanabhivamsa's coverage of the early modern period and the role of Lower Burmese monks in Buddhist affairs is absent after the reign of the fifteenth century Hanthawaddy king Dhammacetti. Nyanabhivamsa recognizes the role of the Peguan courts and monastic literati up through the fifteenth century and the sixteenth century, but he ignores them for the following

45. Maha-damà-thin-gyan, *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yá sa-dàn*, 11.

46. "Bodaw Hpayà Ayu Wada." Royal Order, 22 March 1807, 6.392. He was retained as a courtier with the title of Yaza-thin-gyan and was given the responsibility of looking for areas to make a profit for the court. Tin, *Myan-ma-mìn Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 3.132.

centuries, including the seventeen-year period (1740–1757) that saw the revival of a Peguan court.⁴⁷ In part, this was a reflection of Nyanabhivamsa's focus on the story of the Sudhamma monks. Nevertheless, by doing so, Nyanabhivamsa in effect removed regionalization from the later portions of his history, so that the evolution of Burmese Buddhism appeared to be a single phenomenon emanating from the foundation of Buddhism in Burma to its purification with the sanction of Bò-daw-hpayà.

Nyanabhivamsa also demonstrated that the throne, however unwelcome its intervention in the new "state" orthodoxy, could be "perceived" as having an important, positive role in religious reform. He did so in part by cleansing Bò-daw-hpayà's reign. He makes no mention of his own defrockment or any other events between 1812 and 1819, providing a narrative for only that part of the king's reign that corresponded to Sudhamma control over monastic affairs. Although during this period, that king had tried and failed to appropriate for the throne Sudhamma monastic authority regarding the canonical texts, his actions posed no threat to the long-term survival of the Sudhamma orthodoxy and could thus easily be ignored in Nyanabhivamsa's narrative. The Sudhamma monks, who had used the state to effect monastic reform during the Sudhamma Reformation, had successfully established their place as the keepers of Theravada Buddhist orthodoxy in the kingdom. While the king was obligated to protect the religion and maintain monastic unity, he could only effect monastic reform by first recognizing an uncorrupted monk. This was made impossible by the king himself when he gave his support to the Sudhamma monks and allowed them to reordain or defrock competing monks. With their strong and pervasive connections to other Lower Chindwin elites whom Bò-daw-hpayà himself had raised to powerful positions and upon whom the king depended for his survival on the throne, their long-term survival was assured, as was the throne's failure in its doctrinal enterprise between 1812 and the final years of Bò-daw-hpayà's rule.

47. This should not be taken to suggest that Western Burma was now considered as being outside the Burmese polity. Rather, the evolution of Buddhism is presented for other neighboring states demonstrating that Western Burmese religious developments were purposely removed from the historical record to demonstrate that there had always been a single Burma.

History

As discussed in previous chapters, the Lower Chindwin monks had applied their strict textual approach to religious reform with considerable effect. This approach also played a major role in the hands of both monastic and lay literati, in laying the theoretical foundations of kingship. Lower Chindwin literati and their approach to texts were to help the Kòn-baung court in other ways as well. The massive influx of non-Burmese texts, competing historical traditions among Burmese texts, and the necessity of using documentation in negotiating with the Europeans provided substantial room for different interpretations of the very materials now being used by the Kòn-baung court to substantiate its legitimacy. Textual purists, such as Tun Nyo and Nyanabhivamsa, led Kòn-baung efforts to bring history under the throne's control through documentation and detailed textual analysis.

By 1827, almost a half century of Kòn-baung efforts to bring the information revolution under state control remained unrealized. Bò-daw-hpayà himself accepted failure in monastic and calendrical reform and his new capital at Mingun was abandoned, its intended and yet unfinished centerpiece, the Mingun pagoda, being ruined by an earthquake in 1819, coincidentally the year of Bò-daw-hpayà's death. Regionalism had not been suppressed in Western or Lower Burma, especially in Western Burma, which was severed politically from the Kòn-baung state according to the terms of the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826. However, the state project was not a complete failure. Certainly, Bò-daw-hpayà had strengthened the royal throne, demonstrated by his unusually long tenure on the throne and the peaceful succession of his nominated successor, Ba-gyì-daw. The Lower Chindwin literati and the Kòn-baung court did make several more bids to bring the information revolution under control. Among the most important of these, the focus of this chapter is on the state project to con-

trol Burmese history through the compilation for the first time of a Burmese "national" history in the form of the *Glass Palace Chronicle*. Through this "authentic" history of Burma, state-appointed compilers consciously interweaved regional histories and traditions together, culminating with the establishment of the Kòn-baung court. This text became the chief history of Burma and remains for the Burmese today their chief point of reference for their traditions and historical past. This attempt to bring society and literati activities under royal control was more successful than Bò-daw-hpayà's efforts to effect the same control over Lower Chindwin literati and their texts.

Tun Nyo Corrects History

The effort to control history began with administrative documentation. Upon coming to the throne, Bò-daw-hpayà turned to his old tutor to solve the problems of epigraphic evidence that had emerged in earlier reigns. Symes claimed that fighting during the 1740–1757 War destroyed most monastic records.¹ Although this was probably limited to *pesa* (palm leaf) or *parabaik* (bark) records, both highly flammable, inscriptions were subject to longer-term manipulation. In premodern Burmese Buddhism, patrons donated hereditary servants of the Religion (pagoda slaves) to local monasteries and temples, as well as lands for their upkeep. While there is little evidence to suggest whether or not their life was difficult, we do have evidence that pagoda slaves on occasion did try to escape. The main problem in doing so was that patrons had their names or those of their ancestors chiseled into the inscriptions that marked their donation to the pagoda or the monastery. Other information, such as land and water rights of individual families within such a group might be included as well. Thus, there were strong incentives to change the inscription to suit emerging legal claims. Pagoda slaves thus sometimes chiseled out parts of the inscriptions in these cases. The king gave Tun Nyo, along with the post of governor of the Thetpan royal granary, responsibility for gathering up the inscriptions throughout Burma and depositing them in the royal capital. Apparently, not all inscriptions were so removed, only the "valuable ones" although the criteria remained unclear. While an important goal was to preserve them from further damage, the opportunity was used to

1. Symes, *Account*, 192.

"improve" them.² Additional information was added, including a new foreword to each inscription that was to bear a laudatory statement on Bò-daw-hpayà's legitimacy as a good Buddhist ruler.

At the end of the 1790s, Tun Nyo engaged in another project, made possible by his collection of the inscriptions, in which he sought to "correct" the Burmese central historical narrative. Tun Nyo used the inscriptions he gathered to verify the historical data he introduced into his narrative. This was a major step beyond Kalà who had interwoven information from various texts and oral traditions into a historical narrative that was easy to follow and interesting, but which was often wildly incorrect in dates and other matters. Moreover, while Kalà's references to other texts were few and general, Tun Nyo included throughout his text extracts from a range of literature, including poetry, to compare with his own data on a given event in order to demonstrate different views or to further substantiate the accuracy of his text.³ Such references were clearly cited, perhaps an indication of the degree to which Tun Nyo thought it was important to demonstrate a firm grasp of the known literature to an increasingly aware popular audience. Furthermore, Tun Nyo's focus on accuracy reflects the same concern driving Bò-daw-hpayà's royal edicts on religious texts. This focus would carry through into the writing of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* three decades later.

Tun Nyo appears to have reacted in part to the multitude of ideas and texts that had been pouring into the Irrawaddy Valley, especially those privileging Western Burma. Indeed, while Tun Nyo refers to the *Poem for the Arakanese Princess* (*Rakhine Min-thami Ei-gyin*) and the *Arakan Chronicle*, he used them only to verify information, whenever he could, in the standard Upper Burmese understandings of Western Burmese society, culture, and kingship related by Kalà. Moreover, Tun Nyo's interest in strengthening the place of Kòn-baung rulers led him into other historical projects. One of these was a summary of his 1760 biography of Alaùng-hpayà, again a comparative and precision-oriented historical work. Tun Nyo's main concern in writing his history was that he believed that the dates in Kalà's chronicle were incorrect in many places. Curiously, this effort began at the same time that Bò-daw-hpayà was pursuing calendrical

2. Phayre, "Private Journal," 74. Phayre to Dalhousie, 21 August 1855, in D. G. E. Hall, ed., *The Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence 1852-1856* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 367; Tet Htoot, "Nature of Burmese Chronicles," 54.

3. Tu Nyo referred to such works as the "First" Nawade's *Bayin-hna-ma-daw Ei-gyin* and Ba-dei-tha-ra-za's *Min-ratana ei-gyin*. Twin-thin, *Myanma Ya-zawin-thet*, 1.242,

reform to resolve questions of dates in religious texts and the timing of religious observances. To correct Kalà's narrative, Tun Nyo turned to the inscriptions that he had gathered. Another Lower Chindwin scholar, Û Nò, famous as the Second Monywa *hsayadaw*, composed a chronology of Burmese history providing the dates of major events. He, like Tun Nyo, was almost obsessed about their accuracy. He thus urged people not to accept as final the "dates that he had worked out but said under the circumstances those were the best that he could offer and that they should take them only after checking with those in the inscriptions or other available contemporary sources such as *ayegyins* and *mawguns* . . . for the dynasties that flourished after the fall of Pagan."⁴

Negotiations with the Europeans

The Kòn-baung court turned their control of texts to the task of solving problems in Western Burma in 1817. For decades, tensions had emerged between the Burmese and the British East India Company over the issue of rebels along the Burma-Bengal border. Kòn-baung attempts to suppress Western Burmese rebels had been so prolonged, it appeared, because of disagreements with the British over the nature of the political border between Company territory and the northern frontier in Western Burma. Since the Kòn-baung court had won its contest over local rebels by force, the necessity of negotiating with the Company was the only major obstacle to permanently solving the problem of raiders. The solution decided upon was to undercut the legitimacy of Company rule north of the Naaf River by a strategic use of history and historical documents.

In February 1817, Bò-daw-hpayà issued an order that, in addition to demanding the transfer to the control of his officers of all refugees living under Company protection, called upon the Company to stop their revenue collections in eastern Bengal. Bò-daw-hpayà's argument was that Dacca, Chittagong, Ramree, and other cities had been possessions of the Western Burmese court in the past. Now, as the Kòn-baung state had annexed Western Burma, these towns were now possessions of the central court at Amarapura. The legitimacy of this claim, demonstrable through Western Burmese historical texts and records, was so clear to Bò-daw-hpayà that he coupled his orders with instructions to the governor of

4. Tet Htoot, "Nature of Burmese Chronicles," 54-55.

Mrauk-U to start revenue collections in Dacca and the other towns listed above.⁵ When the Company refused, additional messages were sent, repeating the demands and adding that Murshidabad, located in northern Bengal, was Kòn-baung territory as well, indicating that the *Life of Min-ra-za-gri of Arakan*, which clearly makes this claim, was being used by the Kòn-baung court for its information on the territorial claims of the old Mrauk-U court. These historical claims became broader by the following December, when the British were told that not only did the Company not have a right to Bengal, but that the British had no right to rule any part of the Indian subcontinent, which, with the exception of those parts of Bengal claimed by the Burmese court, was rightfully the possession of the king of Delhi. Thus, the British had the right to rule only Great Britain.⁶

Further problems demonstrated the need for the court to control specific history texts. By the end of the First Anglo-Burmese War, the Kòn-baung state faced some severe and perplexing problems. Increasingly over the course of the eighteenth century, Burmese literati had used history to provide both short and long-term solutions to state problems. Frequently, as circumstances changed, contradictions emerged in their writings, and these remained unresolved, as the state had initiated no major state chronicle to "codify" the historical narrative. One problem involved the Abhiraja origin myth that had proved extremely useful in strengthening the universalistic underpinnings of Bò-daw-hpayà's and now Ba-gyi-daw's kingship. In the context of having lost Western Burma to the British, an origin myth that traced royal descent to Mahasammata through an elder Western Burmese branch of kings posed significant problems for enhancing the legitimacy of the Kòn-baung Dynasty. There was also the problem of the heterogeneous body of Burmese texts, drawn from every corner of lowland Burma, which disagreed on critical aspects of Burmese claims against the British in their negotiations following the Treaty of Yandabo (1826). Burmese ministers also had themselves begun to use historical texts, perhaps to an unprecedented degree, to demonstrate political claims to British representatives. Some of these texts merely amounted to lengthy expositions arguing the Burmese case. When such expositions proved unconvincing, the ministers turned to older historical texts, providing extracts demonstrating how the Burmese had controlled certain disputed

5. Royal Order, 18 February 1817, 7.365.

6. Royal Order, 16 September 1817, 7.435; 28 September 1817, 7.444; Royal Order, 22 December 1817, 7.487.

territories in the past.⁷ The importance of this textual basis for legitimizing political claims initiated royal concerns for the control of the texts themselves. As Henry Burney explains in one case, for example:

When we first arrived at Ava, we were anxious, especially Mr. Judson, to purchase Burman books. This came to the notice of the Government; and we were requested to give ourselves no trouble on the subject, as the King would furnish us with all we wanted, if a list were supplied. The list was accordingly given in, in which was included some historical works and treatises on law. The books now produced were those requested, with the exception of the latter description, not one of which was supplied. It was thought, it appears, that these would have afforded us some insight into the mysteries of Burmese Government, and this was a sufficient ground for refusing them!⁸

The throne had specific concerns regarding the numerous histories circulating throughout Burma, whose different interpretations of Burmese history could weaken the sitting king's claims to unchallengeable legitimacy. For this reason, government ministers continued to deny Burney a Burmese history. As the ministers explained:

[T]hey were unwilling to give me any except a perfect copy as there are numerous inaccurate Editions of the Yazawen, and if one of these were furnished to me by them, I might hereafter appeal to it, as an authorized and correct text. I have tried in vain, to procure or purchase a copy from private individuals in the town.⁹

Indeed, there was one "perfect" edition available, manufactured to serve Kòn-baung interests. Its story will be discussed below.

Toward a State History

As Burney and earlier visitors had demonstrated to the Burmese court, Europeans wanted Burmese histories and would clearly use them to form opinions about the Burmese. More importantly, the fact that different his-

7. Burney, *Journal*, 47, 62, 63, 65, 66, 74.

8. Crawford, *Journal*, 312.

9. Burney, *Journal*, 89.

tories disagreed on details that would have an important impact on state negotiations provided a clear motive to bring the Burmese historical narrative under strict state control.

Growing literary production among the general population exacerbated this problem. Kòn-baung Burma experienced two early spurts in literary activity. First, from the late 1760s up to the early 1800s, then again from the late 1820s continuing for the remainder of the dynasty (and into the colonial period). In both cases, these spurts were encouraged by the stabilization of society after periods of devastation, when the population resettled, villages were reestablished, and texts that had been burned were more or less replaced from memory or copied from surviving texts preserved elsewhere. The 1740–1757 War and the difficulties of Naung-daw-gyi's reign certainly left much to recover from and the internal disorder and population dislocation of Bò-daw-hpayà's reign presented similar difficulties. Moreover, although mainly the monasteries in the royal capital felt the impact of Bò-daw-hpayà's religious reforms, these reforms probably disrupted many rural monasteries as well. Thus, in the late 1760s to early 1800s, we find such literati as the Mon monk of Athwa producing scores of texts to replace ones lost in warfare and the Lower Chindwin literati leading a much more sustained effort to reproduce Burmese texts and introduce new Sanskrit ones.

The latter spurt, from the late 1820s, while caused in part by the lingering effects of Bò-daw-hpayà's reforms and the First Anglo-Burmese War, may have owed much to growing popular literacy that by then had reached a significant momentum. As David Wyatt has found for the Tai world, and suggested of Java, the 1820s witnessed a long-term increase in history writing, on the one-hand, and a broader development of "library-building" from about the same time in all kinds of literature.¹⁰ One is tempted to suggest that in Burma this period may have enjoyed the high rates of indigenous literacy noted by colonial data collectors from the 1870s. In any event, the range of texts and their authorship from this period indicates that Burma was by this time a broadly literate society.

As was the case of late eighteenth century literati who cast a disparaging eye at growing popular literature, officials in the Kòn-baung court, including Lower Chindwin men such as Nyanabhivamsa, were equally concerned that literature, especially historical literature, was emerging outside of royal supervision. This presented a kind of threat to the state; again,

10. Wyatt, "History and Directionality," 432–33.

because they faced an aggressive and powerful European state, whose focus on documentation in political negotiations could find alternative materials on Burmese history useful.

Most dangerous was the "ethnic" literature emerging in various corners of Burma. Certainly, British officers had found such texts useful in constructing alternative views of Burmese history just before the First Anglo-Burmese War. The speed with which these texts moved from local minority literati to British officials and then on to international scholarly publications, which in turn would be read by even more officials, was impressive. A good example involved Thomas Campbell Robertson, who was appointed in the prewar years as the Special Commissioner for the Mugs (Buddhist migrants from Western Burma). He went to Cox's Bazaar in southeastern British Bengal to organize the Arakanese settlers into an auxiliary force to aid the British should hostilities erupt with the Burmans. Later, he served as Commissioner for Arakan in the early years of colonial rule. Around the end of March 1824, just prior to the outbreak of the war, Robertson found himself with a good deal of extra time and used it to translate a Western Burmese historical manuscript with the aid of a Bengali interpreter. An Arakanese Buddhist monk brought this manuscript to him, apparently to inform him of the Western Burmese view of history, one not oriented around the Kòn-baung court. As a result, Robertson's text appears to be the first account since the seventeenth century of pre-1785 Western Burmese history to appear in a Western European language.¹¹ As it demonstrated, Western Burma had an independent history as Arakan as well as an independent line of kings, and thus was not a natural part of the Kòn-baung court. Robertson later provided this translation to Charles Paton.¹² Paton, who became the deputy commissioner for Arakan after its conquest by British forces in the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824–1826), found the text very useful. He made some corrections and added additional material to bring the narrative up to a more recent period. He received the additional material in the form of oral communications from some of the people involved in the actual events (presumably Arakanese). Robertson's history was re-presented in Paton's "Historical and Statistical Sketch of Aracan" (1828). These local efforts to provide British colonial officials with indigenous histories continued throughout much of the

11. During the seventeenth century, several European accounts in Western European languages provided some information on early Western Burmese history.

12. Thomas Campbell Robertson, *Political Incidents of the First Burmese War* (London: Richard Bentley, 1853), 33.

nineteenth century: Robert Boileau Pemberton and Arthur P. Phayre, both active as British representatives to the Burmese court, relied heavily upon similar local texts (the "Pong Chronicle" for the former, and the Nga Mi chronicle and others for the latter).¹³

King Ba-gyi-daw's first step was to gather every copy of the chronicles (*ya-zawin*) from members of his court, presumably including the royal ministers. After selecting parts of the chronicles, he then appointed ministers and other government servants to "collate and revise" them into a single narrative. This effort grew into a larger project in which a new chronicle would be compiled which would incorporate all of Burmese history up through the Kòn-baung kings. For supervision, Ba-gyi-daw turned to Lower Chindwin monks or former monks. Nò was selected to head the chronicle committee, although the Thawkapin *hsayadaw* was also nominally in charge. For help in scrutinizing older chronicles, especially Tun Nyo's *Great New Chronicle*, the defrocked Nyanabhivamsa was also appointed to the committee.¹⁴

The *Glass Palace Chronicle* committee incorporated much of Kalà's chronicle, largely verbatim for the coverage of the post-Pagan period, but with serious differences in their coverage of the Pagan and pre-Pagan periods. Beyond differences in historical data, throughout, there was something new about their approach. While Kalà absorbed his sources, usually without reference to the original work, the *Glass Palace Chronicle* committee made detailed references to the sources of some of the critical data, especially in cases where there was disagreement between traditions. In such cases, the decision to select one tradition over another is justified. One almost sees the invisible hand of Nyanabhivamsa's patron and mentor Tun Nyo, by then dead for over twenty years, and his passion for strict confirmation of historical data by comparison of chronicle information with other texts and inscriptions. However, strict referencing and reliance on fact disguise the underlying political agenda of the court's sponsorship of this chronicle. By justifying changes to Kalà's narrative throughout, Nò, Nyanabhivamsa, and other leading members of the committee were able to incorporate the new Kòn-baung royal legitimization myths. The best

13. Paton, "Historical and Statistical Sketch," 353–81; Robert Boileau Pemberton, "Journal from Munipoor to Ava, and from thence Across the Yooma Mountains to Arracan," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 43.2 (December, 1960): 41, 48; Phayre, "On the History of Arakan," 23.

14. Thaw Kaung, "Two Compilers of Myanmar History and Their Chronicles," 15; Burney, *Journal*, 89; Langham-Carter, "Four Notables of the Lower Chindwin," 337; Tet Htoot, "Nature of Burmese Chronicles," 54.

example is that of Abhiraja. As discussed earlier, Kalà's *Great Chronicle* does not include the Abhiraja migration. Instead, Kalà focuses on Pyu-zaw-hti, son of the sun god and the Naga princess. During the 1770s and 1780s, the Western Burmese tradition of the migration of Abhiraja from India to Tagaung, the competition between his sons upon his death, and the migration of his son Kan-ra-za the Elder, to Western Burma, was transformed into a royal legitimization myth for the Kòn-baung court. However, this adoption left two things unresolved. First, it was unclear what should be done with Pyu-zaw-hti, the old mythological founder. Second, the myth still legitimized a senior Arakanese branch of the same royal family. This was less of a problem early in Bò-daw-hpayà's reign, as he had eliminated the Mrauk-U court and deported its members to Amarapura. As Bò-daw-hpayà's reign entered the 1810s, however, the rebellion of Chin-pyan raised the possibility of a revival of an independent Arakanese court. Moreover, although Chin-pyan had been defeated, the fact that Arakan was ceded to the British in 1826, created additional problems for the myth, as the home of the Kan-ra-za the Elder's line of kings was now outside of the Burmese kingdom.

The solution was to create a second migration. This was only possible through a careful use of different versions of the myth found in the Western Burmese texts on the one hand and the *Treasured Precedents* on the other. Thus, the compilers of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* presented the same tradition as two different, but related myths. In order to do so, Abhiraja's name was used to identify the first refugee Indian king and Abhiraja's (shortened) coronation title of Dhajaraja, provided in the *Treasured Precedents*, was used to identify the second refugee Indian king. The "two" myths were thus integrated, with some adjustment, into one linear narrative. The Abhiraja myth had thus finally evolved into its present form. The fact that the full form of Abhiraja's coronation name (as supplied by Sandá-lin-ka), Thadu Zambudipa Dhajaraja, is included in the narrative of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* further supports this interpretation. The latter text also explains that Dhajaraja assumed the title of Thadu Zambudipa Dhajaraja (as Sandá-lin-ka had Abhiraja), when he became king of Tagaung.¹⁵ The compilers of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* must have realized that they were working with two versions of the same myth. Indeed, they cite several texts, including specific Western Burmese texts, which should have made this clear.

There were obvious incentives to amend the myth as a whole, utilizing

15. *Hman-nàn maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 1.174–81.

the altered central Burmese version. The addition of the Dhajaraja segment of the conjoined versions of the myth removed as the direct link between Burmese kingship and Mahasammata the line of kings from the previous migration, who had gone on to Arakan. A second, new migration, created a new intermediate family bond. This certainly made the whole Abhiraja myth more palatable to the central Burmese court because, as mentioned, the story of a second Sakiyan king circumvents any superior claim of legitimacy on the part of the royal line of Western Burma (whose descendants were still around to raise potentially old royal claims).

The acceptance of the Abhiraja myth left the literati with a major problem. As mentioned earlier, the *Great Chronicle* and other texts had earlier provided another dynastic founder, Pyu-zàw-hti, whose origins were not in India, but in Burma. Well into Bò-daw-hpayà's reign, the story of Pyu-zàw-hti remained in the court literature and both Zei-yá-thin-hkaya and Tun Nyo included him in their accounts of Burmese history. In the eyes of literati who had demonstrated so much concern for authoritative texts and single-stranded narratives, the presence of two different foundation myths must have presented a seemingly irresistible challenge. The *Glass Palace Chronicle* committee thus moved to codify one myth by twisting another. In order to de-mystify Pyu-zàw-hti, the *Glass Palace Chronicle* presented his case as a historiographic problem. The compilers of the chronicle pointed to the existence of several versions of the Pyu-zàw-hti story. In one version, which was discussed earlier, and found in Kalà's ca. 1730 *Great Chronicle*, Pyu-zàw-hti was born of the gods, defeated the four (sometimes five or six) enemies of Pagan, and became the founder king of Pagan. The argument against this myth was made along the same lines of questioning textual authority that we have seen many times before. Altering the Pyu-zàw-hti myth was a challenge because the version they wished to change was included in Kalà. In the case of the Mahasammata origin myth, the compilers of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* simply provided additional material to provide a clear connection and lineage between Mahasammata and the Kòn-baung rulers. In the case of the Pyu-zàw-hti, however, the compilers were defying Kalà, whose text they sometimes used elsewhere to verify or disprove historical data. The solution was both simple and bold. Rather than criticize Kalà directly, the compilers cited him for data about the myth they found useful, such as the number of enemies that Pyu-zàw-hti defeated at Pagan. They criticized whatever else he had to say about Pyu-zàw-hti by attributing the incorrect data to "other histories." By carefully side-stepping Kalà's authority, the compilers argued that certain

aspects of the myth, the marriage of Zan-thi, the female Naga, with the Sun spirit, could not be found in the Pali commentaries and subcommentaries or in the Vedic literature. Thus, the original story of Pyu-zàw-hti must have been fabulous.¹⁶

The other version of Pyu-zàw-hti, which the compilers of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* now codified, and may even have created, but which was certainly not included in Kalà's *Great Chronicle* or in Tun Nyo's *Great New Chronicle*, made Pyu-zàw-hti a human king, descended from the Sakiyan migrations. A sketch of this new version of the Pyu-zàw-hti story is in order. A descendant of the Sakiyan line of Tagaung kings, Thado Adeissa-ra-za, wandered about in disguise and made a living by gardening. In this garden, people made offerings to a Naga if they wanted to conceive a son. Before long, Adeissa-ra-za's queen became pregnant and gave birth to "Zaw-hti." Also in the garden were the Naga king and queen and they looked after him as if he were their own son. Curiously, at this point, Pyu-zàw-hti is given over to a forest dweller, a hermit, for training in archery, but most importantly, in Vedic literature. Possibly, this may be an attempt to reinforce the normative role of such (former) forest-dwelling monks and Sanskrit scholars as advisers to Kòn-baung kings, which would describe Nyanabhivamsa. At the very least, this reference suggests again, as Nyanabhivamsa and Bò-daw-hpayà had believed, that knowledge of Sanskrit literature was essential for the Kòn-baung kingship. In any event, the hermit saw in Zaw-hti the signs of kingship, changed his name to Mìn-hti, and taught him the eighteen arts of kingship.¹⁷

The new account then takes on another dimension of the Indian migration myth. In the past, Zaw-hti was known as Pyu-zàw-hti, and, as his name implies, he was a Pyu. As the old version of the story explained that Pyu-zàw-hti saved Pagan and founded a new line of kings, it was suggested that Pagan society had emerged from the Pyu people, just as the Burmese royal line had through Pyu-zàw-hti. In the new version of the story, however, Zaw-hti is a northerner, descended from the Indian migrations. The *Glass Palace Chronicle* also claims that there had been a prophecy that he would conquer Lower Burma, which he later did. Thus, Burmese kingship and the Burmans moved down from the north, from India to the Lower Chindwin and the Mu River valleys, to Pagan, and, in later centuries, to Lower Burma. Zàw-hti/mìn-hti's adoption by an elderly Pyu couple after

16. *Hman-nàn maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 1.220-21.

17. *Ibid.*, 1.214-15.

he moved to Pagan, the *Glass Palace Chronicle* implies, is the reason for the "Pyu" in Pyu-zaw-hti.¹⁸

Thus, the committee changed Burma's central historical narrative in two main ways. First, it presented only one version of the facts regarding Burmese territorial claims. The text clarified Burmese conquests, named places, and provided dates. The text also drops any ambiguities from the narrative. Ultimately, the *Glass Palace Chronicle* provided the court with a chronicle useful for documenting Burmese state territorial claims against the British and others. Second, the chronicle codifies the major myth of Kòn-baung royal legitimation and points that could be used to argue against it were "ironed" out. The court then provided its own version of Burmese history, repackaged and cleaned up, to visiting Europeans. Thus, when Burney asked the king for a history of Burma, Ba-gyi-daw explained that there was only one correct version and this was in the palace. If Burney wanted a copy of the chronicle he would have to have this one copied. Burney had, understandably, reservations about the finished product. As Burney explained: "How far names and dates may be altered and new facts added in the Old History, depends, it appears, entirely on His Majesty's will and discretion."¹⁹ Although Burney clearly understood the political nature of the compilation of the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, it is doubtful that Ba-gyi-daw himself had a direct role in it, beyond sponsorship.

In his mid-thirties, Nyanabhivamsa had entered Bò-daw-hpayà's service full of fight and a drive to authenticate all kinds of knowledge according to the authority of old texts. In 1831, when both the *Glass Palace Chronicle* and the *Treatise on the Religion* were presented to the king, Nyanabhivamsa was seventy-eight years old. The old man demonstrated that he had not sacrificed his principles, nor had he lost his energy, although he died two years later in 1833. Behind him, he left the major contributions he had made to the basic narratives of Kòn-baung political and religious history, to which most Burmese and European readers would have to turn for information on Burma's past.

These contributions to Kòn-baung histories were timely. The *Glass Palace Chronicle* is unique, for example, in that it is the first Burmese chronicle read by both Burmese and Europeans at about the same time and thus informed efforts by both to understand Burma's past. The writing down in the royal chronicle of myths such as the Abhiraja myth gave

18. Ibid., 1.215.

19. Burney, *Journal*, 76, 89.

these myths such a degree of authenticity that Burmese, especially those of the court, began to characterize local sites and ruins according to what they found in the narrative. This occurred just at the time that Europeans began to explore interior areas of Upper Burma. Thus, on 5 December 1835, Burmese officials led a British survey expedition to some of the ruins at a location that was, or had become known as, Tagaung. The remains did not particularly impress the members of the expedition led by Captain Hannay. As the expedition observed: "the walls of the old fort dwindled away to a mere mound, and [were] hardly discernible from the jungle with which they were covered . . . The whole has more the appearance of an old brick fort, than any thing I have seen in Burmah."²⁰ They had been informed that the place had been built by a king from "Western India," the progenitor of the royal lines of Ava, Pagan, and Prome and Hannay was willing to concede that "enough is still seen to convince one that such a place did formerly exist." Apparently, the uniqueness of the brick fort and the fact that a local "aged priest" was unable to decipher local Devanagari inscriptions was enough to convince the British observers that the foundation of the place was indeed the work of foreigners. One suspects that then current ideas of Indian cultural superiority in "Greater India" may have encouraged this acceptance.

The myth thus entered Western historiography and impressions among the British who interacted with Burmese officials for the remainder of the Kòn-baung Dynasty. In 1836, Burney, then British Resident to the Burmese Court, used a copy of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* given him by King Ba-gyi-daw, inscriptions, Hannay's report from Tagaung, and Burmese itineraries already in his possession, to compose the first Western study of Tagaung. Burney accepted the story of Abhiraja as the Burmese royal origin myth and included an English translation of the narrative.²¹ Burney was clearly unaware that this was a very recently manufactured central Burmese "tradition." If he had been, he did not attempt to disclose this to his readers. A subsequent exploration of the ruins by G. T. Bayfield later in 1836 did

20. Pemberton, "Abstract of the Journal," 87.

21. Henry Burney, "Discovery of Buddhist Images with Deva-Nagari Inscriptions at Tagaung, the Ancient Capital of the Burmese Empire." *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 5 (March, 1836): 157-64; Burney was apparently aware of the utility of the myth for the Burmese court. As he explains: "The great point with Burmese historians is to show that their sovereigns are lineally descended from the thaki race of kings, and are 'Children of the Sun,' and for this purpose, the genealogy of even Alompra, the founder of the present dynasty, is ingeniously traced up to the kings of Pagan, Prome, and Tagaung." Burney, "Discovery of Buddhist Images," 164.

reveal such reservations, but these apparently went unnoticed by later British historians of Burma.²² In any event, the myth now figured prominently in the two main traditions of Burmese history—that of the indigenous chronicles and emerging colonial historiography. The Kòn-baung royal origin myth was now firmly established on both sides of the Anglo-Burmese borders.

The periodization of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* did not include events up to the year of its composition. The original *Glass Palace Chronicle* ends with 1821, although later printed editions gradually restricted this to Alaung-hpayà's reign. The British conquest was not only an embarrassment, but an acceptable conclusion to it was, in Burmese eyes, not yet realized. The court also did not view as permanently lost, Arakan, Assam, and especially Tenasserim, signed away by treaty in 1826. Recording their loss in the chronicle, however, would make both the defeat and the territorial loss a permanent part of the national history. As Crawford found, court writers were already recording the war as a relatively minor event:

I learnt . . . from good authority, that the Court Historiographer had recorded in the National Chronicle his account of the war with the English. It was to the following purport;—In the years 1186 and 87, the Kula-pyu, or white strangers of the West, fastened a quarrel upon the Lord of the Golden Palace. They landed at Rangoon, took that place and Prome, and were permitted to advance as far as Yandabo; for the King, from motives of piety and regard to life, made no effort whatever to oppose them. The strangers had spent vast sums of money in their enterprise; and by the time they reached Yandabo, their resources were exhausted, and they were in great distress. They petitioned the King, who, in his clemency and generosity, sent them large sums of money to pay their expenses back, and ordered them out of the country.²³

Whether Crawford refers to a new edition of the chronicle is unclear, for any such text from this period has not been identified. Crawford or his undisclosed source, however, may have merely confused in-court nota-

22. G. T. Bayfield, "Narrative of a Journey from Ava to the Frontiers of Assam and Back, Performed between December 1836 and May 1837, under the Orders of Lieutenant-Colonel Burney, Resident at Ava," in *Selections of Papers Regarding the Hill Tracts between Assam and Burmah and on the Upper Brahmaputra* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1873), 154–55.

23. Crawford, *Journal*, 176.

tions of events in a chronicle record book with the commissioned chronicles such as the *Glass Palace Chronicle*.

In any event, the court did not begin in earnest a full-scale continuance for another three and a half decades. Following the lead of the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, King Mindon commissioned in the 1860s the compilation of a continuation of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* entitled the *Second Great Chronicle* (the *Duti-ya Maha-ya-zawin-gyi*), covering the events of the 1820s. Like Ba-gyi-daw, Mindon set up a committee of prominent literati, chief among them another Lower Chindwin monk, the Second Maungdaung *hsayadaw*, Shin Nyeyyadhamma (hereafter Nyeyya). At the same time, Shin Paññasami, yet another Maungdaung villager, as well as a disciple of Nyeyya, composed a Pali-language history of the Religion in Burma, the *Lineage of the Religion*, which drew its narrative largely from Nyanabhivamsa's *Treatise on the Religion*.

The continuation of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* did not involve the same questions of textual authority that had permitted Nyanabhivamsa and his colleagues to make substantial changes in the historical narrative. The continuation was written in the context, more so than was the case with the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, of the conscious interaction between Burmese and Europeans about Burmese history. More importantly, the committee members were first-hand witnesses to the events described, especially the First Anglo-Burmese War. Finally, it was composed at a time when the court, under Mindon, who had taken the throne after the Second Anglo-Burmese War, sought to placate the British and thus avoid a third Anglo-Burmese War. This may explain why, unlike the glossing over of the events of the first war that Crawford discussed, the continuation of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* included a detailed relation of the Burmese defeat in that war. It also provided verbatim the embarrassing terms of the Treaty of Yandabo.²⁴ In short, the agenda of the "continuation" committee differed substantially from the earlier committee headed by Nò and Nyanabhivamsa. While the latter engaged in a process of textual verification of data, the former engaged in the politics of putting down contemporary events on palm-leaf.

The impact of the continuation of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* was negligible at first. It came at a time just before Thibaw ascended the throne in 1878 and the British began to slowly shut Upper Burma off from the world. With the *Glass Palace Chronicle* and Kalà's *Great Chronicle* in hand, Euro-

24. Tet Htoot, "Nature of Burmese Chronicles," 51.

pean historians of Burma, now emerging from the ranks of colonial scholar-officials, began to look more closely at non-Burman histories of Burma, particularly of the Mon. Two factors seem to have contributed to this development. First, colonial historians appear to have been interested in the *Glass Palace Chronicle* for what it said about Burma's pre-British past and were not very interested in what the Burmese had to say about the period in which the British began to cut away pieces of the Kòn-baung empire. Second, minority histories, such as those of the Mon, helped to legitimize the annexation of first Tenasserim and Arakan, and then, the whole of Lower Burma, as these areas, they believed, were not natural parts of Burma anyway. Again, the *Glass Palace Chronicle* was still useful to the British, because it provided information about the pre-British period. Moreover, it continued, as ever, to be vital to the Kòn-baung state. Thus, Thibaw's court put the *Glass Palace Chronicle* itself into print in four volumes in 1883, almost at the end of Kòn-baung rule.

Both British and Burmese efforts after the British conquest preserved Nò's and Nyanabhivamsa's legacy. A number of British colonial historians relied on the *Glass Palace Chronicle* for their histories of Burma, including Phayre and G. E. Harvey, and through them a number of colonial historians working with European-language documents. These colonial authorities, however, provided only shades of information found in the *Glass Palace Chronicle* that suited their own purposes. The preservation of both the *Glass Palace Chronicle* and its continuation, the *Second Great Chronicle*, were mainly due to the efforts of one of the denizens of the fallen court, the scholar Û Tin. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Tin brought together the fourth volume of the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, the *Second Great Chronicle*, and other materials to fill the gap between them and that following the *Second Great Chronicle*. With these materials, he compiled and published in 1911 the *Great Kòn-baung Chronicle*. In doing so, Tin preserved the Lower Chindwin literati's legacy, and the Kòn-baung view of Burmese history. Kalà's *Great Chronicle* was also put into print and published in separate volumes in 1928, 1932, and 1960. However, this text had already been absorbed with adjustments by the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, and was thus not a serious competitor as an alternative historical narrative. The *Glass Palace Chronicle* remains Burma's national history.



Burman-ness

In 1810, Dr. Francis Buchanan, an old hand when it came to reporting the "local situation" in India, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and Burma in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, made a report on what to do if Burma went to war with the "English nation." That "arrogant" and "despicable enemy" he explained was weakened to the core because of the ethnic heterogeneity of the kingdom and the poor ethnic relations between the subject peoples and the master Burman race. These were clearly weaknesses that could be exploited to British advantage. As Buchanan explained:

[T]he Burmese Empire contains a variety of distinct nations conquered by the Burmas, and held under the most severe bondage. Not to reckon several large countries . . . which occasionally . . . pay tribute when the Government is sufficiently strong to force it, and not to reckon those numerous Cussay [Manipuri], Siamese & Chinese captives, who form a great part of the population of many of the principal towns: there are five considerable nations subject to the Burmas, some of them but lately subdued, and most of them ripe for revolt and breathing revenge.

The most numerous nation of them is the people called by the Burmas Malat Syan . . . These people are of the same nation with the Siamese, speaking a dialect of the same language. They have been long subject to the Burmas, enjoy considerable privileges, and are I believe the best contented of their Subjects . . . The next most considerable Nation subject to the Burmas, is that named by us Peguans . . . This wretched people more civilized than the Burmas have been lately conquered, and have been most cruelly used . . . the whole are ripe for rebellion, and anxiously wait for some opportunity of assistance . . . the Burmas and people of Aracan being of the same nation and language. Still

however frequent commotions have taken place . . . the original inhabitants have been removed from their homes to different parts of the Empire, all of whom would readily runaway, and assist any invader . . . The next nation . . . is the Tanansaree . . . They have in general been subject or tributary to the Siamese, and have made several attempts to be restored to that connection. The Siamese like the people of Pegu being a more polished race than the Burmas, and better Masters. The last of these 5 nations is named Yo . . . and like the Malat Syan enjoys considerable privileges. It must be easy to perceive that an Empire so constituted is liable to be dissolved with the first attack of any European force. . . .¹

Buchanan's views were not new among European observers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Portuguese Catholic missionaries had made similar observations, as had British observers of the 1740–1757 civil war.² In his work on this conflict, Lieberman demonstrated that an interplay of four factors—"personal loyalty, Buddhist universalism, . . . regionalism," and ethnic tendencies—characterized the war between Ava and Pegu.³ This argument was made in the context of a prevailing literature that portrayed the rebellion as a Mon national struggle against the Burmans, anachronistically identifying Southeast Asian ethno-nationalism in the eighteenth century. In Lieberman's view, in addition to ethnic and regional sympathies, one could be considered a "Peguer" by their political affiliation with the court at Pegu in Lower Burma and a "Buraghaman" by taking the side of the court at Ava in Upper Burma. Colonial historians mistook these designations as hardened ethnic (and even racial) terminologies, that is, as "Mon" and "Burman."⁴

Burmese literati played a substantial role in changing the ways in which Kôn-baung Burmese thought about ethnicity and, in their own way, contributed to the problematic treatment by colonial historians of Burmese history. Moreover, the literati role was complex, representing both diverse and dynamic thinking. The purpose of this chapter, however, is not to prove exactly what the average Burmese thought about ethnic identities

1. Dr. Francis Buchanan, "Account of Burma and Pegu and the Steps necessary in case of a Rupture," HM 388, no. 21, ff. 599–613.

2. See Rev. A. Saulière, tr., "The Jesuits on Pegu at the End of the XVIIIth Century," *Bengal Past and Present* 19 (1919): 64–80; the various British accounts of Burma in this period in Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, 1.133–217.

3. Lieberman, "Ethnic Politics in Eighteenth-Century Burma," 462.

4. *Ibid.*, 455–82.

and identifiers, if the source materials are even available for such a project. Rather, the purpose is to demonstrate that Burmese thinking about their society and the people in it, at least among those who have left written records, was complex and in constant flux in tandem with the changing political and social context of their times.

Colonial Ethnicization

Michael Aung-Thwin has challenged the ethnic frameworks provided by colonial scholars for understanding the nature of precolonial historical developments.⁵ Aung-Thwin's chief example is the myth of the Three "Shan" Brothers. Upon the supposed collapse of the classical Burmese state of Pagan, the indigenous chronicles explain that three brothers assumed rulership in Upper Burma. Although earlier European observers accepted that the brothers were of the "true royal stock," Phayre and those who followed claimed that they were Shan.⁶ Thus, the fall of Pagan, a Burmese state, and the political problems that followed could be periodized along racial lines, race being at least one determinant of the course of Burmese history.

This corrective is necessary because of the ethnicization of Burmese history found in the colonial histories that still influence scholarship today. This process had early roots. British rule in parts of Burma from 1826 invited new, European views that mistook what it was to be Burman or Burmese with European notions of race. Later colonial historians misunderstood ethnic identifiers in the indigenous histories they used as sources as evidence of strong identities that prompted local historical developments.⁷ Buchanan purposefully over-emphasized ethnic hostility for political purposes, but later generations of Europeans writing on Burma, like J. A. Stewart, having grown up in a Europe influenced by Charles Darwin's *Origins of Species* (1859), may have been more sincere, but equally misleading. One of the first to do so was the scholar-official and first Commissioner for Lower Burma, Phayre. In a small series of articles written in the late 1860s, entitled "On the History of the Burma Race," Phayre provided

5. Michael Aung-Thwin, "The Myth of the 'Three Shan Brothers' and the Ava Period in Burmese History," *Journal of Asian Studies* 55.4 (1996): 881–901.

6. Arthur Phayre, "On the History of the Burma Race," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 2 (1869): 29–30.

7. Aung-Thwin, "Myth of the 'Three Shan Brothers'," 881–901.

a narrative of Burmese history that was oriented around racial migrations and conflicts:

it is evident from the history that the whole power in the country which constituted Ava from A.D. 1364 until A.D. 1554, was held by Shans, or persons of Shan descent . . . These tribes of the Thai branch . . . had been pouring down from their highlands by various routes through a long period of time. They gradually accomplished in the countries watered by the Irawati and the Lower Salwin, a plantation and revolution similar to what had been worked out by the north men, in the British islands, and on the coasts of Western Europe in the eighth and ninth centuries . . . The successful attack on Ava in the year 788, A.D. 1426, by the Shan chief of Mo-nhyin, renewed the Shan race and spirit in the kings of Ava. But the monarchy was weakened. From this time for more than a century, the kings of Ava were rather the heads of a loose confederation of Shan chiefs . . . than sovereigns of a Burmese kingdom . . .⁸

Other colonial historians after Phayre shared his racial paradigm. These historians mistakenly equated the "national" histories of the Kôn-baung period with racial histories. Stewart once attempted to make the case that the *Glass Palace Chronicle* sought to minimize the role of non-Burmans in Burmese history. As Stewart explained:

Just as the great Alison rewrote the history of Europe with the object of showing that providence was on the side of the Tories, so the compilers of the Hmannan Yazawin [*Glass Palace Chronicle*] seem to have treated the Arakanese and Talaing chronicles somewhat cavalierly, and to have admitted only so much of them as conduced to the honor and glory of that part of the province in which they were more immediately interested. . . . I must . . . discuss rather fully a passage in the Hmannan which is obviously based on the Razadirith Ayebon. In the fighting around Prome a Talaing named Upakong performed prodigies of valor and was invited by Minyekyawzwa to come to the Burman camp and display his prowess. The Talaing general gave permission, and the

8. Phayre, "On the History of the Burma Race," 77. As Phayre further wrote of the founder of the First Taung-ngu dynasty, Tabin-shwe-hti: "At Ava, the defeat of king Tho-han-bwa had increased his difficulties. His Shan followers had always been hated by the Burmese, whom they equally oppressed. In the palace there were both Shan and Burmese guards. The Shan officers had long wished to clear the palace of all Burmese..." Ibid., 65.

Ayedawbon describes how on the appointed day Upakong dressed himself with great care and looking every inch a soldier mounted horse and rode to meet Minyekyawzwa; who received him on the bank of the river opposite his camp and accompanied him across. The Hmannan omits to state that Upakong was met on the near bank of the river by Minyekyawzwa and makes no mention of his soldierly appearance. His reception in fact becomes merely an act of princely patronage instead of a well-deserved tribute from one brave man to another. And the romance goes completely out of the story.⁹

Stewart was writing in the context of colonial-era views that conflated ideas of race, ethnicity, nationalism, and culture, so his consideration of Burmese history should be interpreted in that light. Stewart, for example, mixes a number of elements that should be considered separately. For one thing, he begins by correctly stating that the *Glass Palace Chronicle* takes the perspective of Ava, the state perspective. Stewart then errs when he assumes that "Ava" is equivalent with Burman and, furthermore, that the Burman perspective at the time that the *Glass Palace Chronicle* was written was anti-Mon. The example provided by Stewart, however, is a weak one indeed. It does not amount to a denigration of the Mons as an ethnic group, or an erasure of Mons from the historical narrative, but rather a failure to include all the details from a very large Mon text into a broad history of Burma that had many other equally substantial narratives to work with as well. Everything could not be included and certainly, as with the Mon hero discussed by Stewart above, not all details available on Bayinnaung, a "Burman" hero, were included in the *Glass Palace Chronicle* either.

European impressions of "Burmans" as an exclusive ethnic or racial group also meant that they interpreted other population groups in the same way. One of the main confusions about the Bengal-Western Burma border problems in the late eighteenth century and up to the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824–1826) is that they indicated a sort of ethnic nationalism that bound Arakanese migrants together and provided the chief motivating cause for incursions into Kôn-baung territory. Colonial scholars were especially given to this interpretation, largely because of a colonial "liberation" myth implicit in the documents that such historians relied

9. John Alexander Stewart, "Note on Some Authorities for the History of Burma," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 13.2 (1923): 71.

upon as their primary sources and the colonial society of which they were a part. This myth, that border raiders such as Chìn-pyan, were primarily interested in the liberation of Arakan, from "Burman" rule, helped justify the British role in the First Anglo-Burmese War and their following annexation of the province.¹⁰ A "self-conscious nation suppressed" provided legitimacy to British expansion. Phayre, for example, attributes to the best-known of the Arakanese invaders, Chìn-pyan, an "intense hereditary hatred" of the Burmans and implies that this helped attract other Western Burmese migrants in Southeastern Bengal to his standard.¹¹ D. G. E. Hall saw Chìn-pyan's invasion as an attempt not to oust rival elites and gain personal power, but rather as an attempt to "liberate his country,"¹² while another scholar labels one of the rebel groups as the "Arakanese liberation army."¹³ As was the case with misunderstandings of Burman-ness, these too were foreign impressions.

Pre-1780s Burman-ness

Burmese records use the term Burman/Myanma in the Pagan period and Chinese sources referring to Burma as M'ien presumably do the same. From the beginning of sustained European contact with Burma in the early sixteenth century, Europeans applied some version or another of this term, such as Buraghma, Brama, Birma, and a seemingly endless list of other variations, to the main population group of the kingdom of Burma.

The Kòn-baung Burmese do not appear to have understood Burman (Myanma) to mean race in the Western sense of the word. Burmese did indeed refer to *lu-myo* (*lu* meaning people) but this does not help us much in determining its meaning. As Thant Myint-U observes, the etymological roots of *myo* may be taken to mean seed or "in the local metaphor," sperm.¹⁴ However, *myo* is a very elastic term that could really mean a num-

10. This view is best reflected in Arthur Phayre's suggestion that "[Arakanese] pride even makes them affect to regard the occupation of [Arakan] by the British, as a national re-conquest from the Burmese, achieved by themselves, because a number of Arakanese refugees . . . accompanied the British invasion, and fought by its side." Phayre, "On the History of Arakan," 23–24.

11. Phayre, *History of Burma*, 223.

12. D. G. E. Hall, "Anglo-Burmese Conflicts in the 19th Century: A Reassessment of Their Causes," *Asia* 6 (August 1966), 39.

13. Ashin Okkantha, "History of Buddhism in Arakan" (PhD diss., Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1990), 108.

14. Thant Myint-U, *Making of Modern Burma*, 88.

ber of things. Today, it describes a category, a class, a type, a kind, a breed, a species, a strain, and even, as the author mentioned above suggests, a seed.¹⁵ Early nineteenth century understandings of the term certainly allowed for *myo* or its other form, *a-myo* to be the root of family, race, as well as class or "a set of beings or things,"¹⁶ the Burmese equivalent of "seed" being *a-sei*, as it is still referred to today, or *myo-sei*. This usage, however, applied only to plants. It did not apply to the seed of animals (including humans), which Kòn-baung era Burmese called *thout*, the "seed . . . of animals" or "sperm."¹⁷ At least in the early Kòn-baung period, *lu-myo* lacked the same kinds of biological connotations that Europeans would give to "race" later in the nineteenth century. As indigenous texts from the period indicate, *myo* was taken to mean, as suggested above, simply a "type" or "kind" and, when combined with *lu*, meant that this was simply a classifier rather than a statement on the biological origins of ethnic groups.

If "Burman" (or Burmese) was not an exclusive blood-defined category, in the later European sense of the word, what was it? One important hint can be found in the 1820s meeting between Adoniram Judson, the American Baptist missionary, and King Ba-gyi-daw. During their conversation, Judson told the king, as he had told many others, of the progress he had made in converting Burmans to the Christian religion. The king, evidently concerned that "Burmans" might be abandoning Buddhism, asked: "Are they real Burmans? Do they dress like other Burmans?"¹⁸ Religion and culture were the cornerstones of Burman-ness by at least the late early modern period, although they presumably had much older roots. Cultural practices such as hairstyles, language, and body tattooing or piercing were important practices that gradually helped define ethnic belongingness. Burmans tattooed themselves, while Peguers did not,¹⁹ leading Alexander

15. *Myanma-Ingalei-Abhidan* (Yangon: Ministry of Education, 2001), 359.

16. These are the meanings found in the dictionary made by Charles Lane and Makkara in the 1830s and later published as Charles Lane, *A Dictionary, English and Burmese* (Calcutta: Ostell and Lepage, 1841), 61, 338, 367.

17. *Ibid.*, 367, 386.

18. Edward Judson, *The Life of Adoniram Judson* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1883), 204.

19. Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies*, ed. William Foster (London: Argonaut Press, 1930), 27; While commoners among the Burmans were tattooed "jet-black" over the thigh and the hip, elite Burman men had their thighs tattooed "with the representations of tigers and other wild beasts." Hunter, *Concise Account of the Kingdom of Pegu*, 29–30.

Hamilton to observe that "the Natives of each Nation are easily known by the distinguishing Mark of Painting or Plainness."²⁰

Early modern Burma seems to have not been far different from early modern Europe, before the rise of the nation-state, in this regard. We can piece together a picture of different ethnic groups, "nations," speaking certain languages, participating in certain religions (or in the same religion in peculiar ways), sharing hairstyles, myths, and other cultural practices. This did not necessarily mean that such ethnic markers motivated people to act. In Smith's conceptualization of "ethnic categories" and *ethnie* (ethnic communities), he suggests that in the case of the former, "to an observer, (certain people) possessed many of the ethnic elements . . . but little or no sense of community or solidarity."²¹ Indeed, the cellular organization of early Burmese society meant that people were primarily organized into essentially vertical, patron-client type relationships.²² From the Pagan period, Burmese society was organized around occupational cells or guilds. Specialists in particular kinds of knowledge or functions were concentrated in certain quarters of towns and villages and even formed entire villages by themselves. Likewise, the state also organized royal service people along similar, cellular lines.²³ This made the management of manpower resources easier. A local great man, who would serve as the intermediary between the court officials and the members of the cell, headed these cells and conducted supervisory functions within his cell. But certainly, over the course of the early modern period, those of Burman, Mon, and other cultures/ethnic markers had moved closer to *ethnie*. As Smith explains of such a later formation:

To qualify . . . as an ethnic community or *ethnie* . . . there must also emerge a strong sense of belonging to an active solidarity, which in time of stress and danger can override class, factional or regional divisions within the community . . . if we are to speak of a genuine *ethnie*, this sense of solidarity and community must animate at least the educated upper strata, who can, if need be, communicate it to the other strata

20. Further, somewhat dubious claims were made of biological differences, typically that the Peguans were olive colored. Hamilton, *New Account of the East Indies*, 27.

21. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 30.

22. Aung-Thwin, *Pagan*, 92, 93. Such patron-client relationships remained relevant to popular loyalties throughout the early modern period at both the local and "national" levels. Lieberman, "Ethnic Politics in Eighteenth-Century Burma," 459.

23. Aung-Thwin, *Pagan*, 91–93.

and regions in the community. It is quite possible for ethnic solidarity to be overlaid by other types of allegiance for certain periods . . . but, where *ethnie* is concerned, we should expect the periodic re-emergence of ethnic solidarity and institutional co-operation in sufficient force and depth to override these other kinds of loyalty, especially in the face of external enemies or dangers.²⁴

Certainly, Burma, by the mid-eighteenth century, witnessed the mobilization of people, if only as one element of mobilization as Lieberman has shown, based on at least rudimentary ideas of shared ethnic identity.

Among the pre-Kòn-baung literati, ethnic belongingness was implicit in the rankings of cultural achievements that they articulated in their texts. Kalà and other pre-Kòn-baung literati, for example, included in their histories and other texts, references that sought to hegemonize those of the court they wrote for and to belittle those of its rivals. Stories denigrating cultural objects of a rival kingdom were one way to do this. Such accounts relate that attempts to introduce cultural items from the Mrauk-U court into the Avan court were frowned upon by Avan royal advisers in the fifteenth century. The connection between the adoption of certain cultural signifiers and political allegiance was a view not limited to texts. It does appear to be the case that ministers were generally worried about Tabin-shwe-hti favoring Mon subjects by adopting their hairstyle and manners in the sixteenth century.²⁵ Given the numerous independent political centers that dominated fourteenth to sixteenth century Burma, it is not surprising to find literati engaged in different projects of ethnic hegemonization as well. Kalà, writing in early eighteenth century Ava, claimed that the Arakanese on the western side of the Arakan Yoma mountains were descended from war captives that the Pagan-era Burmese king Alaung-sithu had placed there after his wars. By contrast, a member of the Arakanese literati claimed that the Arakanese were the progenitors of the Burmans who lived in Ava and the Delta Burmans (the Aukthas) who lived in Pegu. As this account explains, three Mro chieftains had come down-river and intermarried with the indigenous queen. The youngest of the three men, when he came to the kingship, was embarrassed by the uncivilized dress of his fellow Mro tribesmen. He thus ordered them to remove their headdresses and adopt the ways in which the Pyus dressed. After

24. Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 30.

25. Sandà-lin-ka, *Mani-yadana-poun*, 95; Kalà, *Maha-ya-zawin-gyi*, 2.215.

some time, the Mros migrated down the eastern slopes of the Arakan Yoma mountain range and, in working their rice fields, they expanded up to the village of Pagan. The Mros became known as Maramas [Burmans] and those who continued to expand southwards, were eventually known as the "Aukthas." As the text explains, "Auktha and Marama are actually the same."²⁶

Ethnic origins and cultural hegemonies aside, "ethnic categories" could translate into hardened ethnic identities in certain contexts. Daily contact between different groups naturally produced perceptions of difference. The scattering of war captive settlements, or "colonies," among the general population also meant that service groups and village communities came into daily contact with groups organized around ethnic identifiers. One can only conjecture that it was probably the case that the kinds of inter-village disputes over water or arable land rights, thefts of cattle or crops, or even disputes between aggressive village headmen that were to be found in all societies divided into tight exclusive communities sometimes, or even frequently, were allied to perceptions of ethnic difference. Such local conflicts could easily provide a framework for understanding the workings of the larger world, but only partly so, for temporary exigencies would probably not lead to sustained animosities.

More severe situations would lend themselves to sustained ethnic mobilization. As Smith observes:

[I]t is not society or ethnicity that determines war, but conflict itself which determines the sense and shape of ethnicity. War may not create the original cultural differences, but it sharpens and politicizes them, turning what previously were "ethnic categories" into genuine integrated ethnic, aware of their identities and destinies.²⁷

This appears to have been the case in Burma during the 1740–1757 War. As discussed in chapter 3, Alaung-hpayà's early ideas of kingship upon which he modeled himself drew heavily from popular Upper Burmese stories of Pyu-zaw-hù. This did not mean though, that when he lifted his hand and pulled it back, claiming that he could "wipe away [the Mons] as thus," that he was not also emphasizing Burman feelings of physical superiority.²⁸

26. Sithu-gammani-thinkyan, "Rakhine Ra-zawin" MS 2297, AMs, 1886 [ca. 1870s], National Library, Ministry of Culture, Yangon, Union of Myanmar, f. 16a.

27. Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 39.

28. Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, 1.151.

However much this is open to interpretation, significant evidence is available, much brought to light by Lieberman, that Alaung-hpayà referred to a Burman ethnic belongingness, among Lower as well as Upper Burmese, to motivate support for his cause. Ethnic slurs, denigrating Mons, was the order of the day. Alaung-hpayà clearly identified himself as a Burman, he did not distinguish between Upper Burmese Burmans and Delta Burmans (*Auktha*), and he was possessed of great animosity toward the Mons generally.²⁹ The demands of the war encouraged this feeling, as winning support from the Delta Burmans would also necessarily undercut the regional basis of the Peguan court. Thus, Alaung-hpayà corresponded with Delta Burman officials in Pegu, attempting to win them over to the "Burman" cause. It is true that Alaung-hpayà had promised not to alter the status of anyone who defected from Pegu in 1756, including Mons.³⁰ Even then, those Mons who did take his oath remained not of the "Burman's own kind" (*Myanma zat-du*).³¹ Such views were strengthened in the first year of Naung-daw-gyi's reign, when the former Mon general, Dalabàn, appointed to a "high office" by Alaung-hpayà, rebelled, taking advantage of problems in the north.³²

Eighteenth-century sources indicate that the heightened awareness of ethnic identity prompted by the 1740–1757 war lingered on for decades. Tun Nyo and fellow scholar Myat San were in their late twenties and thirties, respectively, when they joined Alaung-hpayà's camp. They were first-hand observers of many of Alaung-hpayà's campaigns and their accounts of the war and of their patron's reign were very personal, using "We" to refer to the northern Burmans fighting against Pegu.³³ Myat San also became well known as a poet and his writings were given to creative writing, which he used to embellish accounts, laud heroes, and even to redefine events. The similarities in their views and the timely coincidence of their service under Alaung-hpayà and the kings who succeeded him, led to confusion in twentieth-century scholarship concerning their respective works and Burmese scholars have only recently rectified this. Both scholars wrote

29. On the "Ramanya Mons," see Royal Order, 4 March 1755, 3.92; 9 April 1756, 3.144.

30. Royal Order, 18 January 1756, 3.143.

31. Royal Order, 2 January 1755, 3.91.

32. Symes, *Account*, 63, 65.

33. [Tun Nyo], "Alaung-min-tayà-gyi Ayei-daw-bon," 28–29; this is also indicated in Let-wè-naw-yahta's 1790 poem, "Pyuha-sakki-myó," where he refers to Pegu-thà/Talaings (Mons) fleeing from "our" power. Let-wè-naw-yahta, "Pyuha-sakki-myó" in *Thenanga-pyuha-sit-thamaing hnin Pyuha-sakki-pyó*, ed. Û Ba Thàung, 83 (Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1943).

biographies of Alaung-hpayà. Myat San composed one which has never seen publication, appears to have been missing until relatively recently, and presently remains in manuscript form in Mandalay. Tun Nyo wrote one as well, but toward the end of his life, he was also preparing a manuscript summary of this text to include as a final installment to his *Great New Chronicle*. Burmese editors in the twentieth century, being aware of the existence of the “lost” Myat San text and having in their possession Tun Nyo’s later summary of the *Biography of Great King Alaung [hpayà]* (*Alaung-mìn-tayà-gyì Ayei-daw-poun*), which was intended for incorporation into the *Great New Chronicle*, confused Tun Nyo’s original *Biography of Great King Alaung [hpayà]* as the biography authored by Myat San.³⁴ In any event, the version misattributed to Myat San does not bear a composition date, although it appears to have been written in the early decades after Alaung-hpayà’s death in 1760.

In his first version of “Alaung-mìn-tayà-gyì Ayei-daw-poun,” Tun Nyo portrays Alaung-hpayà’s campaign against Pegu as an ethnic struggle. To build a base in the north, Alaung-hpayà is said to have written to other Upper Burmans to remind them of their Burman identity and thus encourage loyalty on this basis. Despite contemporaneous evidence that Alaung-hpayà accepted Mons into his service, Tun Nyo claims that in Alaung-hpayà’s victory at Myaung-wùn, early in the campaign, he had given orders not to kill those “Burmans, Shans, Yuns, and Kadus” mixed into the Peguan army, only those who “transgressed,” apparently the Mons, were killed.³⁵ One problem, however, was how to treat those Mons whom Alaung-hpayà had taken into his service. Among these was Dalabàn, the Peguan general who had deserted the Peguan court in its last days and whom Alaung-hpayà later appointed to a “high position.” Dalabàn is thus treated in Tun Nyo’s text as a special case. When Dalabàn was the Peguan court’s garrison commander at Ava, Dalabàn, Tun Nyo claims, had put the Burman captives to work (that is, he had not killed them) and did not force them to cut their hair in the Mon fashion. Dalabàn’s generous treatment of ethnic Burmans was then contrasted in the text with the ethnic-minded intentions of Banyà-dalá. As we are told, Banyà-dalá replaced Dalabàn as the Peguan commander at Ava shortly afterwards because the latter had not forced the Burmans to adopt Mon ethnic markers, namely cutting their hair, again, in the Mon fashion. It is unclear

34. Personal communication from U Thaw Kaung.

35. [Tun Nyo], “Alaung-mìn-tayà-gyì Ayei-daw-bon,” 28–29.

whether there is more to these accounts than the imagination of the writer. No Peguan, “Mon,” source or European account refers to the recall of Dalabàn, he remained one of the chief Peguan commanders, and this account is only corroborated by the later version of Alaung-hpayà’s life written decades later by Tun Nyo under his then title, the *Twìn-thìn-taik-wun*, Maha-si-thu.³⁶

Assimilation in the Kòn-baung Period

European visitors of Ba-gyì-daw’s time found Burmese accepting as their own Anglo-Burmese children of itinerant British garrison troops and Burmese mothers. The widow of the famous Dr. Johann Helfer, upon finding a Burmese man stroking the hair of his wife’s Anglo-Burmese child as if the child were his own, was so impressed that she suggested that ~~British rule would lead to the evolution of a new race drawing together the~~ best features of both of the parent stocks.³⁷ As culture and not blood determined ethnic belongingness in precolonial Burma, however, Burman-ness proved remarkably well suited for the assimilation of people from other ethnic groupings. The idea implicit in Buchanan’s account provided at the beginning of this chapter, however, is that even cultural assimilation in Burma was impossible. Language and culture were inextricably tied to the nation. Any evidence of steps toward assimilation then, thus had to be artificial and coerced. As Buchanan explains of the Mons: “The greater part of them have taken refuge with the Siamese, and the remainder have assumed the Burma dress and language in order to avoid extortion.”³⁸

If European observers saw potential advantages in a Burma defined on the basis of race or ethnicity, a kind of ethnic house of cards, the Kòn-baung state and population would have found these views odd. While early Kòn-baung kings had encouraged anti-Mon sentiments and continued earlier practices of organizing some royal service groups based on eth-

36. [Tun Nyo], “Alaung-mìn-tayà-gyì Ayei-daw-bon,” 28; Tun Nyo repeats the same episode in his later version of “Alaung-mìn-tayà-gyì Ayei-daw-poun” on page 161.

37. Countess Pauline Nostitz, *Travels of Doctor and Madame Helfer in Syria, Mesopotamia, Burmah, and Other Lands*, tr. George Sturge, 2.132 (London: Richard Bentley and Sons, 1878). These, of course, were the days before the denigration of Burmese in British eyes in later, “high” colonial, times.

38. Buchanan, “Account of Burma and Pegu and the Steps necessary in Case of a Rupture.”

nic identifications, such measures were increasingly inconsistent with the demands of maintaining a growing and multi-cultural empire. An emphasis on ethnic divisions complicated simpler and thus administratively more useful divisions, such as those between royal servicemen and free populations. Certainly, a survey of local revenue inquests indicates that by the 1780s, and possibly even earlier, local headmen made no distinction between ethnic groups, with the exception of Karens and Zabeins, whose seclusion from Burmese society generally was coupled with special tax rates and responsibilities.³⁹

The de-emphasis of ethnic difference by the state was not limited to the Kôn-baung period although it sped up from the 1780s. Lieberman has drawn attention to a number of long-term processes that fostered significant cultural and religious homogenization in late early modern Burma that led to the absorption of ethnic minorities into an overarching "Burmese" identity (or Burman-ness). Nor was the de-emphasis on ethnic differences limited to Burma. Lieberman has discussed in-depth the evolution of the three core states of mainland Southeast Asia—Burma, Vietnam, and Siam, that swallowed up and integrated the smaller states of the region. In this process, larger and more integrated societies experienced the spread of core cultures, religions, and languages, in the context of domestic economic growth, political centralization, and administrative sophistication.⁴⁰ These developments had a homogenizing effect on Burma's diverse population, without relying on forceful conversions of people of different ethnic groups.

One such long-term development was the greater geographic spread of court influence over the Religion. When Nyanabhivamsa dispatched monastic missions throughout Bô-daw-hpayà's realm, for example, he relied on Upper Burmese Sudhamma monks who were Burmese speakers, the language of the court and major political centers throughout Upper Burma. A related development was the transition from Pali-language discourses to Burmese-language discourses in monastic recitations and texts.

Although the monks of Nyanabhivamsa's textual community were usually well versed in Pali, the religious language of Theravada Buddhism, many monks, especially those from areas other than the Lower Chindwin, who accepted re-ordination into the Sudhamma fraternity from 1788 were probably illiterate in Pali. This also reflected the increasingly popular-ori-

39. For example, see Trager and Koenig, *Burmese Sit-tans 1764–1826*, 64, 67, 71, 75, 76, 80, 82, 86, 91, 144, 145.

40. Lieberman, "Local Integration and Eurasian Analogies," 475–572.

ented focus of late early modern Buddhism in Burma in which Pali discourses were translated into Burmese, a development encouraged by the promotion of Sudhamma textual practices. As one observer commented in the 1830s concerning Burman monks at Martaban: "Few of them understand the Pali language, although it is the vehicle of their religious doctrines . . . their discourses . . . are chiefly Burman versions from the Pali."⁴¹ Throughout Bô-daw-hpayà's kingdom (and those of his successors), then, the centers of learning and the schools of literacy that were supported by the state also used Burmese. This produced a bifurcation among the monasteries, so that those based in the towns used Burmese and those in rural areas outside of Upper Burma tended to use the local vernacular. As Low commented in the 1830s, confusing language and ethnicity, the "Burmans" had assumed "all the sacerdotal offices in" Southeastern Burma.⁴² Recognition that language was one of the remaining obstacles to full assimilation of the Mons became clearer in the First Anglo-Burmese War. After the Mon rebellion of 1826 and 1827, either the Kôn-baung court or its local representatives forbade the use of the Mon language in the Lower Delta.⁴³ This may also explain why "Mon" histories began to be translated into Burmese about the same time. Other considerations must also have played a role; the fact that local administrators spoke Burmese and the utility of Burmese in finding an important patron in the Kôn-baung hierarchy must have made learning Burmese attractive, even essential. Certainly, Burmese became the *lingua franca* in Lower Burma and as its use became universal, there was no turning back.⁴⁴

41. Low, "History of Tennasserim," 329.

42. Ibid., 255. European observers tended to see the political situation of Mons in Lower Burma in similar terms. Since Upper Burmese appointees governed Lower Burma, one would have found few Mon speakers holding such appointments. This helps to explain Symes' claim that between the Burmans and the Mons the only difference was that the former dominated the political offices.

43. According to the First Commissioner of Lower Burma, Phayre, writing in 1873: "After the war with the British, the language of the [Mon] people who had welcomed the [British] invader was furiously proscribed: it was forbidden to be taught in the Buddhist monasteries or elsewhere. The result was that, in little more than a century, the language of about a million people has become extinct. It is probable that there are not now one hundred families in Pegu Proper in which it is spoken as their vernacular tongue." Phayre, cited in Government of India, *Report on the Census of British Burma Taken in August 1872* (Rangoon: Government Press, 1875), 30.

44. Malcom observed in the 1830s that although most of the rural population of Pegu was Mon "nearly all of the men understood Burman" and, moreover, the Mons had ceased to be "a distinct people." Malcom, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia*, 1.83.

The acceptance by Mons of Burman-ness continued beyond the end of Kòn-baung rule in Lower Burma after 1852.⁴⁵ So too, for other ethnic groups, assimilation continued beyond 1885, not so much because it was the beginning of the colonial era, but rather because assimilation had become an ongoing, self-sustained development.⁴⁶

Kòn-baung Literati and Burman-ness

Kòn-baung literati in the 1780s and after responded to and contributed to changing perceptions of ethnic identification and assimilation in a number of ways. Some mobilized historical data to demonstrate the multi-cultural roots of Burman-ness, while others mobilized ethnic schema, borrowed from non-Burman texts, which confounded ethnic hierarchies. Generally, these literati moved away from the anti-Mon hostilities of earlier Kòn-baung writers.

From Bò-daw-hpayà's reign, a change occurred in the ways in which some prominent literati treated the Mons and the Arakanese in their texts. Zei-yá-thin-hkaya, in his *Introduction to the Golden Palace*, a study of the cultural and mythic origins of the traditions, terminologies, and structures of the Burmese court at Amarapura, treated Burmese culture not as a peculiar complex, but rather as an assimilationist product of borrowing from Mons and others. Many of the royal boats used by the Kòn-baung court were identified as being of Mon origin and nomenclature, including the Kamakaw, Kuyup, and Zalagabin boats, as were musical instruments used in the palace, and other court practices. Moreover, Zei-yá-thin-hkaya stressed that during the reigns of King Bayín-naung (r. 1551–1681) and King

45. Phayre, cited in *Report on the Census of British Burma Taken in August 1872*, 30; See also H. P. Hewett and J. Clague, comps., *Burma Gazetteer: Bassein District*, vol. A (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1916), 25; W. S. Morrison, *Burma Gazetteer: Henzada District*, vol. A (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1915), 37; A. J. Page, *Burma Gazetteer: Pegu District*, vol. A (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1915), 52; B. O. Binns, *Burma Gazetteer: Amherst District*, vol. A (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1934), 27.

46. G. E. R. Grant Brown, comp. *Burma as I Saw It 1889–1917* (London: Methuen, 1926), 18–19; R. B. Smart, comp. *Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District*, vol. A (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1917), 84; H. F. Searle, comp. *Burma Gazetteer: The Mandalay District*, vol. A (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1928), 77.

Nan-dá-bayin (r. 1581–1599) during the First Taung-ngu Dynasty and that of King Nyaung-yan Min (r. 1597–1606), the founder of the Restored Taung-ngu Dynasty, an equal mixture of Mon and Burman language and culture defined these courts.⁴⁷ The Arakanese were not without their contributions to Kòn-baung court culture as well.⁴⁸

Nowhere does Zei-yá-thin-hkaya suggest cultural hegemonies per se, although he does indicate that regional kings paid political homage to the Kòn-baung royal ancestors. This grant to significant borrowing by the Burmans from Mon and other cultures contrasts sharply with the more hostile attitudes of earlier Kòn-baung writers. Those literati, including Kalà, sought to hegemonize the cultures of opposing courts in favor of their own kingdom. In addition to Zei-yá-thin-hkaya, other Upper Burmese literati likewise toned down the ethnic rhetoric. In his second version of his history of Alaung-hpayà, Tun Nyo follows the general narrative of his circa 1760 text. However, he did not include at least some of the episodes that put Mons in a negative light (it may have been too bold of a step to revise everything). This does not appear to have been an oversight: non-Burman materials were now being used more heavily from Bò-daw-hpayà's reign. Writing about 1800, Tun Nyo's *Great New Chronicle* made conscious use of both Mon and Western Burmese texts in his careful analysis of the historical events of Upper Burmese history.⁴⁹ One reason that borrowing from non-Burman literature was easier than before was that many of the political centers from which they were derived were now under Kòn-baung rule; Pegu was from 1757 and so too Mrauk-U after 1784.

Some of the new literature used by Lower Chindwin literati provided a model for rationalizing ethnic and cultural origins. One of the texts that Nyanabhivamsa used was the *Life of Min-ra-za-grì of Arakan*, mentioned above.⁵⁰ This text appears to have reached literati circles in the late 1770s, shortly after it was composed (ca. 1775). This text, which seems to have borrowed from earlier Indian texts, describes in detail how the kings descended from Mahasammata, the first king of the world, divided the

47. Zei-yá-thin-hkaya, *Shwe-bon-ní-dàn*, 33, 65, 83, 98–99,

48. *Ibid.*, 34.

49. See for example, his reference to the Kalyani inscription at Pegu (1.90 and 1.127), the *Mon Ya-zawin* (1.250), the *Yakhine Ya-zawin* and the *Maha-muni Thamaing* (1.89), and the *Yakhine Min-thami-eigyin* (1.105) in *Twin-thin, Myanma-ya-zawin-thet*.

50. "Rakhine Min-ra-za-grì Arei-daw sa-dàn," f. 34a.

people of the world into 101 ethnic groups. As the text explains, after a smaller number of countries had evolved, more followed:

When the countries divided again, due to the increase of princes and grandsons (of the royal dynasty), the rightful races of kings and ministers was not ended, there were 101 countries and 101 parasols, and each with a king. These kings gave special consideration to the people of the countries and regions. They gave 101 names to the seven kinds of Maras, the three kinds of Talaings [Mons], the twenty-three kinds of Shans, the fifty-six kinds of Kalas [Indians], the nine kinds of Tayoub [Chinese], and the three kinds of Chins.⁵¹

Vague references to the 101 kinds of peoples may have been circulating among some Burmese as early as the seventeenth century, and possibly earlier.⁵² This text, however, provides an elaborate and detailed account. As a result, the account provided by the *Life of Min-ra-za-gri of Arakan* becomes more significant.

In his early twentieth-century study, the *Administrative Precedents of the Burman Rulers* or *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, Û Tin, referring to the *Life of Min-ra-za-gri of Arakan* as the *Old Arakan Chronicle* (as does Pe Maung Tin), discusses the influence of the “101 kinds of people” model for the emergence of peoples in nineteenth-century Kòn-baung literature. As he explains, Nò, who, in addition to heading the committee that would compile the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, had compiled a separate history during Bò-daw-hpayà's reign, modified the list. In his modified formula, Nò claims that there were seven kinds of Myanma, four kinds of Talaings (Mons), thirty kinds of Shans, and sixty kinds of Kalas, amounting to a total of 101 *lu-myo* (races of people). However, he did not include Chinese or Chins as separate ethnic categories. Later Kòn-baung writers who accepted the 101 divisions followed Nò's modified version of the model provided in the *Life of Min-ra-za-gri of Arakan*.⁵³ The import of this view is that it suggested a kind of equality in the emergence of different ethnic groups and did not imply the same kind of hegemonization of ethnicity found in earlier literati treatment of the peoples of rival states. It also suggested that ethnic divisions were part of the natural human condition that defied change or assimilation.

51. Ibid.

52. Thant Myint-U, *Making of Modern Burma*, 88.

53. Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 2.24.

Nò's view was very different from that of other literati in Upper Burma, particularly the other Lower Chindwin literati compiling the *Glass Palace Chronicle*. Certainly, we know that Nò and Nyanabhivamsa read the *Life of Min-ra-za-gri of Arakan* for the *Glass Palace Chronicle* committee refers to it several times (under the title of *Old Rakhine Chronicle*) in order to help determine the historicity of certain stories included in the *Great Chronicle*. The *Glass Palace Chronicle*, however, does not include the 101 races of mankind. Instead, it emphasized and further developed the Abhiraja myth. In its final form, as related in the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, the founders of Pagan provided the kings for the states that were gradually absorbed by Ava and its eventual successor, the Kòn-baung polity. As discussed, in the story of Abhiraja (and later Dhajaraja), Indian kings had brought their people to Burma and established the first kingdom at Tagaung. When Kan-ra-za the Elder and Kan-ra-za the Younger had their dispute, Kan-ra-za the Elder took his people around the Irrawaddy Valley, establishing his son as the ruler of the Thet, Kanyans, and the Pyu, before he entered Arakan and intermarried with the local royal line. Burmans were thus descendants of the Indian race, with a right to rule over other ethnic groups within Burma. Moreover, the *Glass Palace Chronicle* also did not codify the seven different kinds of Burmans, the Marama or the Myanma, as the *Life of Min-ra-za-gri of Arakan* had, or as the line of scholars who followed Nò's narrative would. The peoples of Western Burma, among who were those self-identified as Marama, remained Arakanese, the same people whom Alaung-sithu had created out of deported war captives as discussed earlier. Thus, the *Glass Palace Chronicle* gave hegemony to the kings of Upper Burma, but it also implied that ethnicity was not set in stone and it could be changed.

Later Lower Chindwin literati were thus creating a Burman ethnic category that was not exclusive, but one that could easily assimilate the diverse peoples of the state now ruled by the Kòn-baung kings. The purpose of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* committee was indeed to establish an authoritative history of Burma that would be useful for its patron, the Burmese throne. As discussed, from Bò-daw-hpayà's reign, court perspectives that were hostile to the Mons had given way to literati reconstructions of the Mon contributions to Burmese culture and to understandings that ethnicity was not hard and fixed, but flexible. In the eyes of the court and the literati, the Mons were assimilating to Burman-ness and their resistance to Kòn-baung rule was becoming more a part of Burma's past than of its present or future. The *Glass Palace Chronicle* committee, unlike

Tun Nyo in 1760, took non-Burman texts (Western Burmese histories being the chief example) seriously and relied upon them heavily to verify or disprove historical episodes referred to in earlier "Burman" histories.

By the end of the Kòn-baung period, when colonial surveyors began to look for the old "ethnic groups" that had divided the Burmese population in Kòn-baung court documents, they found, at one level, a fairly homogeneous population that was Buddhist, Burmese-speaking, and Burman. However, assimilation into Burman-ness, did not necessarily mean the abandonment of non-Burman ethnic identities, but rather, at least at first, a layering of ethnic identifications. Colonial surveyors found everywhere in lowland Burma people who lived like Burmans, spoke Burmese, and were good Burmese Buddhists. Nonetheless, these "assimilated" or "assimilating" Burmans also, perhaps in other contexts, identified themselves as members of non-Burman ethnic groups.⁵⁴ This is in keeping with F. K. Lehman's classic study of ethnic categories in Burma, "Ethnic Categories & Theory of Social Systems." Lehman suggests that ethnicity is a flexible reference system that people use selectively to interpret the world around them. In Burma, ethnic categories are roles in a system of many other roles. Different groups have access to more than one ethnic role and thus, one's "ethnicity" changes as one interacts with different people in different contexts.⁵⁵ Lehman's focus is on minority groups, such as the Chins and Karens (and most recently the Tai), but his theoretical model applies as easily to the "Burmans" or Burman-ness.

One caveat to the encouragement of assimilation, however, was that primary religious superiority had to be posited in the Upper Burmese heartland of the Kòn-baung kings. Rather than a "Burman" oriented view, for example, the *Glass Palace Chronicle* provides a throne-centered approach to Burmese history. This meant, as discussed in the previous chapter, that the Upper Burmese courts, the forebears of the Kòn-baung Dynasty, were granted hegemony in Burma's political and religious evolution. Bò-daw-hpayà argued that the pure texts of Buddhism had not come from Lower Burma. Likewise, the important religious objects of conquered peoples were brought to Amarapura, such as the Mahamuni image from Arakan. What could not be moved physically was then patronized

54. See, for example, the discussion in Grant Brown, *Burma as I Saw It 1889-1917*, 18-19.

55. F. K. Lehman, "Ethnic Categories in Burma and the Theory of Social Systems," in *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities, and Nations*, ed. Peter Kunststadter, 105-7, 110-11 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).

where it was. Kòn-baung kings who followed Bò-daw-hpayà, for example, continued the practice begun by Hsin-pyu-shin of placing a new final atop the Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Yangon at least once during their reigns.⁵⁶ The compilers of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* generally cooperated with this state project. For coverage of much of Burma's early modern period, it meant that autonomous religious developments in Western and Lower Burma were neglected. We find that both the *Glass Palace Chronicle* and the *Treatise on the Religion* (as well as the *Lineage of the Religion*) do not include local histories of the Religion after the late fifteenth century and until the eighteenth century, almost as if nothing occurred in either area at all until they were brought under Kòn-baung rule, again an effort to privilege one political (and religious) center. There were limits, especially when the state project interfered with Nyanabhivamsa's ideas of how religion in Burma had evolved. He thus ignored Bò-daw-hpayà's earlier attempts to disenfranchise Lower Burma of the origins of the Burmese monastic order. The *Glass Palace Chronicle* retained, for example, the standard account that Shin Araham had come up to Pagan from Thaton with the correct teachings. In doing so, the status of Mons as intermediaries in the monastic order's evolution was preserved, the *Glass Palace Chronicle* stating that the sets of the Pali canonical texts later taken from Thaton to Pagan were written in Mon script (Mon/Talaing *akkaya*) and had to be translated into Burmese script (Myanma *akkaya*).⁵⁷

Assimilation was thus not a new development of the colonial period, but an extension of trends of cultural assimilation begun during the Kòn-baung period, perhaps earlier. What was apparent though, was the long term and complicated impact of the work of the Lower Chindwin literati. European treatment of ethnic categories in their histories as strong identities was only made possible by the general existence (with the occasional exception of such references as the three "Shan" brothers) of such terms in the indigenous histories they relied on. Colonial historians erred not so much because they invented an ethnic history of Burma but because they did not understand why the ethnic references were there and, more importantly, did not pay careful attention to how these references changed as Burmese history moved, and was changed, from one text to the next.

56. Horace A. Browne, *Reminiscences of the Court at Mandalay: Extracts from the Diary of General Horace A. Browne, 1859-1879* (Woking: Oriental Institute, 1907), 15.

57. *Hman-nàn maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 1.269.

chapter seven

European Learning

In October 1835, E. A. Blundell, the Commissioner of British Tenasserim invited along a “native officer” of the colonial revenue department, Û Shwe Tun, and his followers, on his trip to Calcutta. The stated purpose of the invitation was to allow this group of Burmese to be admitted into the presence of the Governor-General and to see “the many extraordinary, wonderful and beautiful things to be seen.” Shwe Tun, whose journal of the visit was published the following year, took notes on all the new Western technology he beheld, such as iron steamships; large steam engines in operation at an iron foundry, a cotton mill, and at a textile factory; a bridge that turned on a pivot; and an electro-magnetic machine at the mint.¹

The electro-magnetic machine was the newest of Western technological innovations. Hans Christian Oersted had discovered the relationship between electricity and magnetism in 1820 and Michael Faraday invented the first electric motor in 1821, followed by Faraday’s discovery of electro-magnetic induction a decade later. Finally, in 1832, the French inventor Hyppolyte Pixii used Faraday’s design to build the world’s first effective electrical generator.² The electrical generator, powered by steam engines, would have an enormous impact on Western technology, but by the mid-1830s, most Westerners would have been as unfamiliar with the machine and as unaware of the range of tasks to which it could be put as the Burmese who viewed it at Calcutta in 1835. The latter’s British hosts thus conducted a series of demonstrations that put the Burmese in awe. First, they used the machine to make water in a basin bubble and turn into “smoke” (steam). All of the Burmese in attendance then held each other’s

hands as one after another took turns dipping a hand into the water causing them to experience “a sort of retraction of the whole muscles of the body.” Finally, a large iron trough was placed before the machine and the Burmese watched as brass, iron, and silver thrown into it “became red hot and melted.” As Shwe Tun writes: “Looking at and reflecting on this machine and trough, we imagined that if similar large sized troughs were made, the effect would be like a thunderbolt, which falling on Towns, might utterly consume them.”³

The Burmese visitors returned home to Tenasserim impressed with what they had seen. Shwe Tun does not mention anything about whether or not he would make any further engagement with Western learning after the conclusion of the voyage. What Shwe Tun does relate to his readers is that the West had many strange things that the Burmese did not have. Nevertheless, these impressions did not amount to a transfer of technology, only exposure to it as a kind of Western exotica. If Blundell had intended to impress, or intimidate, the representatives of some of Britain’s newest colonial subjects, he had certainly succeeded.

In 1831, only a few years before Shwe Tun’s visit, the Burmese court had sent their own mission to Calcutta, headed by the fifty-six-year-old Û Shwe who had served in Tun Nyo’s old post as governor of the Twin-thin Revenue Department. Shortly after his return to Yangon on 12 July 1833, he completed an account that he (or his secretary) had worked on during their lengthy stay in Bengal. Shwe recorded the places where he had been, including the mint, the aquarium, and the cotton mill at Fort Gloucester.⁴ Unlike the mission sponsored by Blundell, Shwe, known as a “man of letters,” with substantial knowledge of and interest in history and geography, had also visited other places in Bengal that were associated with the pre-British past, such as the Taj Mahal. More importantly, Shwe placed special emphasis on his trip to the Mahabodhi temple at Bodhgaya, the site of the Bodhi tree under which the Buddha had achieved Enlightenment. Taking a sapling of the tree to replant in Burma, Shwe drew up a plan of the temple in such a way that it agreed with centuries older descriptions of the temple found in Buddhist texts in Burma. Shwe had evidently found the visit to Bengal interesting, not so much because of the new things that the Europeans had, but for what his visit to the old sites of Bengal, as the

1. Û Shwe Tun, *Journal of a Visit to Calcutta in the Year 1835* (Maulmein: Free School Press, 1836), 1, 6, 14, 15, 21.

2. James Dyson and Robert Uhlig, comp. *Great Inventions* (London: Robinson, 2001), 246–47.

3. Shwe Tun, *Journal of a Visit to Calcutta*, 21–22.

4. Ma Kyan, “Twan: San: Wan Mahā Cañsū Û: Rhwai,” *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 45.1 (1962): 31–33.

ancient Buddhist land of Magadha, could reaffirm about the established learning in the Burmese royal capital.⁵ While some Burmese of the 1830s, on both sides of the British border, would find Western learning, especially technology, interesting, many among the literati did not yet recognize that a major transformation of Burma's information order had been initiated.

The filtering of Western learning into Burma was a long, slow process. Western technology made the Burmese of the 1830s feel as awkward as it would the Indonesians of the late colonial period. In the latter case, Rudolf Mrázek uses the moments of indigenous encounters with this technology as a methodology to better understand the mode of colonial culture. These encounters, he explains, caused Indonesians to "move, speak, and write in a way that broke through—or at least scratched—the otherwise smooth surface of their behavior and language."⁶ Western technology also made the Burmese feel awkward and "scratched" their language and behavior, but in a very special 1830s way.

The Burmese found that they were unable to yet bridge the gap between the explanatory regime of their own information order and the simultaneous introduction of so many Western machines and other aspects of Western learning.⁷ Western technology had emerged slowly over time, building upon incremental advances that gave Westerners time to reformulate their view of the world one small step at a time. In earlier encounters with the West, technology transfer had been limited to better versions of technology that the Burmese already had, such as firearms. When it came to the new wave of European technology in the 1830s, the Burmese encountered a very advanced generation of technology, all at once, without the benefit, to borrow a term from cultural studies, of a prior text. The decade or so after the First Anglo-Burmese War, however, brought entirely new objects. These were machines whose internal parts moved without human manipulation. They were powered by invisible forces (actually, electricity and steam) hidden inside them, for Burmese saw the "smoke" as an effect, not

5. Cephas Bennett, "Mr. Bennett's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.9 (September 1834): 354.

6. Rudolf Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colony* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), xvi.

7. Although the electric shocks experienced by Shwe Tun and his friends and the sight of steamships moving upriver without oarsmen were new and unyielding to explanation (although not to description), the Burmese do not appear to have experienced the stress that sociologist Alvin Toffler associates with "future shock" or "information overload." Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, 1970).

the source of power. Denied in the moment of initial encounters an understanding of the body of knowledge that had led to these machines, Burmese found them difficult to comprehend and frightening. As reports relate in the mid-1820s, for example, the appearance of the steamship caused the first Burmese who encountered it to run away in fear.

Only a few years later, at the beginning of the 1830s, however, the Burmese were running in the opposite direction, to view the strange boat on the river or to examine the machine that could make hundreds (even thousands) of books in the same time that a Burmese scribe would take to copy only one. The Burmese had begun to adjust to the presence of Western technology at a moment when technology transfer was undergoing a transition from music boxes and telescopes to printing presses and steamships. The new technology teased the literati, filling them with both curiosity and resistance. While some among the literati passionately defended the "old learning" encouraged by Lower Chindwin literati such as Nyanabhivamsa in earlier decades, others began to question their own information order and interrogate Western learning in order to penetrate the mystery of the new machines.

Europeans

The Kòn-baung construction of Europeans drew upon earlier episodes of European-Burmese interaction, when Burmese confused Europeans as being one of the many different groups of Kalàs (Indians), referring to them as Kalà Pyu (white Indians). Intercourse with Muslims introduced another referent for Europeans: *Farin*.⁸ Like the Thai word for Westerner, *farang*, this term is derived from "Frank," a usage borrowed from the Islamic world and owing its origins to the warfare between the Franks and the Muslims on the Iberian Peninsula centuries earlier. Europeans, it was supposed, lived somewhere on the fringes of Zambudipa, the great central island of the Buddhist cosmos. Kòn-baung era literati, however, were aware that Europeans did not come from India and now called them *Tho-*

8. This is the transliteration, given the Burmese usage of "p" for "f," although it would otherwise be transcribed as Purin-kyi. See examples in Kalà, *Maha-ya-zawin-gyi*, 3.166; *Dutiya-maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 488. This is also the case of Fukien, which is written out as Pukyin.

hisaung, so-called after their woolen clothing.⁹ Mid-nineteenth century murals of royal ceremonial processions and views of town life in Amara-pura illustrate Europeans as clean-shaven white men in long heavy coats.

The first Europeans to visit Burma were traders, but others soon entered royal service as mercenaries or as war captives, and were always connected with the use of firearms. Portuguese and French captives and their descendants, for example, became the hereditary artillerymen of the crown. For the Burmese court, contingents of Europeans always had to be watched, however, because of their knowledge of firearms and the fact that they could just as easily support rebels as they did the crown. Portuguese mercenaries and local Mon residents supported an independent Portuguese pirate colony at Syriam under Philip de Brito in the early seventeenth century. These Portuguese raided interior towns as far inland as Taung-ngu and were only brought to heel in 1613 after a long siege. Alaung-hpayà's campaigns against Pegu in the 1750s were made more difficult by French mercenaries. Alaung-hpayà, either fearful of a British presence at Negrais or genuinely believing that the latter had supported Mon rebels as well, massacred the British residents of the settlement in the late 1750s.¹⁰

Burmese courts were tolerant of Catholic priests who visited Burma and set up missions for European servicemen.¹¹ These priests brought the rudiments of early modern European ideas about medicine and other, relatively "harmless" kinds of learning.¹² The royal court regarded Catholic learning unthreatening, because it believed that these priests focused on religious learning and catered to communities that were already Catholic. The precolonial Burmese state usually left non-Buddhist religious men alone, so long as they did not try to challenge Buddhism among Buddhist communities. Indeed, non-Buddhist religious men were even patronized

9. This is the term used in Kin-wun Min-gyi, *Landan-myo-thwa-ne-sin-hmat sa-dàn* (Rangoon: 1908), 2.457 and in Û Pò Hlaing, "Raza-damma-thingaha-kyàn," in *Yaw Min-gyi Û Pò Hlaing Adduppatti hnín Raza-damma-thingaha-kyàn*, ed. Maung Tin, 141–311 (Yangon: Unity, 2002).

10. Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, 53–54, 252; Dalrymple, *Oriental Repository*, 1.345; See also the appendix, "The Tragedy of Negrais," to D. G. E. Hall, *Early English Intercourse with Burma 1587–1743*, 2nd ed. (London, 1968).

11. Fr. Manoel da Fonseca, "Father Manoel da Fonseca, S. J., in Ava (Burma) (1613–1652)," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, n.s., 21 (1925): 27–48.

12. The only thorough history in English of the history of the Catholic Church in Burma is Paul Ambroise Bigandet, *An Outline of the History of the Catholic Burmese Mission from the Year 1720 to 1887* (Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1887).

by the court as a means of keeping order among foreign communities resettled in the kingdom. It is probably for this reason that Catholic priests and their learning generally had very little impact on Burmese learning despite having a presence in Burma for centuries. At the same time, Catholic priests were collecting significant data on Burma and its culture, religion, state, and society. Nevertheless, this information did not spread within Europe to the degree that other European accounts did until the nineteenth century. At that time, some of the Catholic treatises on Burma began to be translated and published. Furthermore, representatives of the British East India Company began to interview Catholic priests on what they knew about the workings of the Burmese state. Thus, although some Catholic orders possessed Burmese type for printing presses, dictionaries, and detailed accounts of Burma in the eighteenth century, such innovations and knowledge had to be rediscovered by others, including American Baptist missionaries, in the nineteenth century.¹³

The main exception was a brief period of conversions among the Burmese when De Brito allowed local Catholic priests to enforce conversions to Christianity. Likewise, he ransacked Buddhist pagodas, melted down temple bells, and engaged in other disrespectful acts against the Religion. Much of this was recorded in indigenous literature, including Kalà's *Great Chronicle*.¹⁴ Some Kòn-baung literati emphasized the De Brito episode as an important event in the history of the Religion. This episode had great utility as a means of connecting Buddhism in Lower and Upper Burma without conceding religious authority to the Peguan court that Alaung-hpayà had toppled. In his *Treatise on Monastic Lineage*, Manimala used the De Brito episode to portray the destruction of the Religion in Lower Burma and its reestablishment by the Upper Burmese ruler Anauk-hpet-lun in 1613. It should be stressed that the importance of this development is in Manimala's overall historical scheme, not in any invention of the events he describes, for much of the information on De Brito's assault on pagodas is verified by Portuguese sources. The invention that is involved is that the autonomous religious history of Lower Burma disap-

13. One such Catholic account, that of Father Sangermano, was translated into English and published in 1833 as *A Description of the Burmese Empire Compiled Chiefly from Burmese Documents*.

14. Kalà records that De Brito, alias Nga Zinga "dug holes in the Buddhist pagodas in the area of the town of Hanthawaddy [Pegu] and after pulling away the stones, took the gold and silver images, making gold and silver [pieces] which he traded with sea merchants [boat people]." Kalà, *Maha-ya-zawin-gyi*, 3.111.

pears after this event and the focus of Manimala's narrative is on Upper and Central Burma, the "Burman" lands after 1613. This use of De Brito, however, was not adopted by Nyanabhivamsa in his *Treatise on the Religion*, or by Paññasami in his *Lineage of the Religion*. It may have been the case that as literati moved away from the anti-Mon rhetoric of the early decades of the Kòn-baung Dynasty, there was no longer a need for such an episode to demonstrate Upper Burmese dominance in Burma's religious history. Certainly, Paññasami demonstrated no hesitance to credit the fifteenth century's King Dhammacetti of Pegu as an important influence in Buddhism throughout both Upper and Lower Burma.¹⁵

The failure of Nyanabhivamsa and Paññasami to include the De Brito episode may also indicate efforts by these men to expurgate Europeans from Burman religious history. Conservative literati such as Nyanabhivamsa were hesitant to entertain European learning as European missions arrived at the Burmese court in increasing numbers from the 1790s. Of course, the inclusion of the episode as a representation of the European assault on Buddhism would logically have been useful. Not including the Europeans at all may also have served to put some distance between Europeans and Burman heritage. This would have been especially important because the De Brito episode also demonstrated that Europeans had ruled at least a part of Burma centuries earlier. After all, Nyanabhivamsa compiled his history just five years after the Treaty of Yandabo (1826), while the unwilling Kòn-baung court was forced to accept a British Resident at the capital, it was contesting British territorial claims in Assam and along the Manipuri border, and it still hoped to regain the lost province of Tenasserim, if not Arakan as well.

Eighteenth and nineteenth century European learning presented a new challenge to the influence of the Lower Chindwin literati, mainly because they were ill equipped to combat it. Earlier conflicts over learning (or teachings) were easier to win because of their intimate knowledge of old texts, especially because they had commanding knowledge of both Sanskrit and Pali literature. The competition with European learning, however, was fought on new ground because it made no claim to be based on ancient European texts, much less Sanskrit or Pali ones. Instead, European knowledge was empirical, based on the present and the observable, which

15. Mei-hti *hsayadaw*, *Vamsa Dipani*, 126–27, 130–31; Paññasami, *Sasana-vamsa*, 48–53.

was an entirely new field of enquiry. While the Kòn-baung literati represented a large and diverse segment of the population, literati began to coalesce around two extremes. Some focused on the "Indian learning" and the old texts, while other literati believed that the old learning could be challenged by ideas and information coming from Europe.

Lower Chindwin elite families and monasteries had produced the most prominent group of literati among the proponents of Pali and Sanskrit learning, or as these literati termed it, the "authentic learning." However much they sought to change society, they were, in the context of longer-term Burmese social evolution, traditionalists. They looked back to earlier sources of Burmese culture, whether in the Sanskrit texts of the Brahmins or the orthodox Pali texts of Sri Lanka. It was true that they moderated the information they drew from such sources in ways that benefited the court, but their field of knowledge fitted into earlier Burmese views of the world, India being Mazzimadesa (middle earth), the land of Asoka and Godama Buddha, the land around which the world pivoted. Tying kingship more closely to Mahasammata and to the Sakiyan migrations was not a watershed, in the sense of pushing Kòn-baung Burma into a radically different direction, but rather more of a reaffirmation and enhancement of its perceived Indian roots. This was a role suited perfectly for the forest-dwelling monks and former monks who shared an extended river valley with Hinduizing Manipur and who appear to have studied Sanskrit texts with as much energy as they pursued Pali literature. Significantly, we do not find Nyanabhivamsa, such a powerful force in the Sudhamma Reformation and in the old learning centered on Pali and Sanskrit texts, as interested as some other literati in obtaining information on Western science, history, and other topics.¹⁶

Ironically, the Lower Chindwin also produced some of the figures, such as Prince Makkara and Û Gaung, who played leading roles from the 1830s in the introduction of Western knowledge and in challenges to the "old learning" whose prominence their kinsmen had worked so hard to estab-

16. In addition to the unusual silence regarding Nyanabhivamsa, such an important figure in Burmese society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in European reports, on the one occasion when we do have information of his questions to a European envoy, he apparently asked the same kind of superficial questions that had been posed by the likes of Alaung-hpayà. He did observe, however, that the English were "an extraordinary people to wander so far from home." Symes, *Account*, 391.

lish years earlier. However, a much more geographically diverse population of learned and curious men soon joined these scholars. European learning seems to have gradually influenced literati among many ministers of the royal court and of major centers that had heavy intercourse with Europeans. These men appear to have had an unusual openness to foreign cultures generally and some of them even appear to have had almost a fetish for things European. On frequent occasions, they invited Europeans into their homes in which they engaged in intellectual intercourse among gatherings of their friends. One such man was Mìn-hla-naw-rahta, whose father had aided Bò-daw-hpayà during his exile in Singu's reign and whom Bò-daw-hpayà had appointed as the governor of the Myawaddy Revenue Department in 1782 and the governor of Hanthawaddy from the mid-1790s until 1806. He was noted for mildly unconventional behavior, such as wearing his sandals indoors around his house. He treated Europeans with "the familiarity of an old acquaintance," introducing to them his young children and even asking one visitor to help him decorate his house with tables and chairs in the European style.¹⁷

Interest in, or respect for, European learning did not necessarily mean love for the Europeans. Possibly no minister during Bò-daw-hpayà's reign displayed greater contempt and even hatred of the English than the "Mi" chief minister. He still made efforts, however unrealized, to learn astronomy from visiting Englishmen and even informed his son that he should befriend the English as "such persons rarely come to our country, and we should therefore endeavor to benefit [our] society while they stay."¹⁸ Nor, as many Europeans found out, did Burmese eagerness to learn from Europeans mean blind acceptance, rather quite the opposite. They defended their own views of society and nature and questioned the new ideas and technology. As the missionary Eugenio Kincaid observed in 1835, after debating issues of science and religion with Burmese: "There were no people in the world, who understood the art of reasoning [better] than the Burmans."¹⁹

17. Û Tin, *Kòn-baung-hset maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi* (Rangoon: Leidi Makkaing, 1968), 2.147. Symes, *Account*, 98, 494; Hiram Cox, *Journal of a Residence in the Burmhan Empire and More Particularly at the Court of Amarapoora* (London: John Warren, 1821), 67–68, 165, 174–75, 176.

18. Cox, *Journal*, 274, 349.

19. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.7 (July 1836): 165.

Discovering Europe

Increasingly, over the course of Bò-daw-hpayà's reign and for the remainder of the dynasty until its fall at the end of 1885, Europe emerged as a new source of texts and ideas. In a sense, both Europeans (and Americans) and the Burmese equally "discovered" each other during this period. Earlier interactions between the two had been more one-sided. When Anauk-hpet-lun captured Portuguese and Indo-Portuguese mercenaries at Syriam in 1613, for example, he resettled them in the interior and made them hereditary artillerymen, but neither he nor anyone else seem to have paid them much attention save for occasions when they needed them for combat. Questions posed by European visitors to such kings (and vice versa) as Alaung-hpayà were devoted to relatively superficial topics such as the weather, the distances traveled, and military strength. They were used as formulaic introductory remarks before the real business of political and military alliances and trade agreements were to be discussed.

Over the course of the next few reigns, however, the nature of this interaction changed or, more exactly, broadened. While military, political, and economic agendas remained fundamental to both the visiting European deputations and Burmese ministers, they increasingly sought to learn about each other, their cultures, their histories, philosophies, and religions. Perhaps one major reason for this was that the people involved had become more sophisticated as well. Literati such as Tun Nyo had largely displaced the peasant military commanders who had dominated Alaung-hpayà's court as government ministers. On the other side, Europeans were represented more by scholars and medical doctors such as Buchanan and Bayfield, and even the military men who headed these embassies do appear to have been better educated and more intellectually inclined than their predecessors. In other words, learning had become more important in both Europe and Burma by the time they interacted with each other in full force from the mid-1790s.

The court was especially interested in what European knowledge had to offer. King Ba-gyi-daw and, later, King Mindon, devoted substantial time during royal audiences posing questions to European representatives regarding Western science and geography. Visiting Europeans gave Ba-gyi-daw numerous mechanical toys, an electrical machine, and a *camera obscura* when he was a child. The latter was an ancestor of the camera of modern photography, consisting of a pierced box containing a prism that

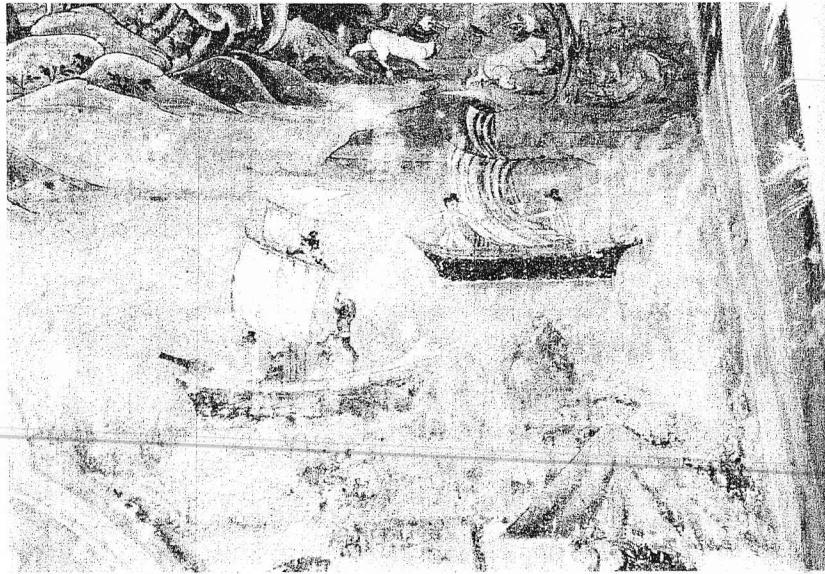


FIG. 9. Europeans in an Early Nineteenth-Century Temple Mural

replicated in miniature any scene the lens was aimed at. This was the kind of “rocket science” of its day. Both Europeans and Burmese were more intrigued by the mystery of its operation than by the results, for the scene it displayed could be more readily seen by simply looking away from the *camera obscura* and directly at the subject of the image. Ba-gyi-daw also pursued other kinds of scientific knowledge, borrowing in one case an illustrated book of natural history from Hiram Cox who visited the court as an envoy at the end of the eighteenth century. Even Prince Thayawaddy, who was known for his hostility to the British, had demonstrated a “liking for European science” before taking the throne. Female members of the royal court were similarly impressed. Thiri-pawaya-talawka-yatana-min-gala-dewi, who was the Nan-ma-daw Queen to her half-brother Mindon until her death in 1876, devoured western science. The English merchant Charles Lane gave her some instruction in astronomy, she had some

knowledge of Western mathematics (at least of its basic numerical system), and she made use of the English Nautical Almanac.²⁰

The steamship, however, drew broader attention. The Marquis Joffroy d'Abans had experimented with the application of the steam engine to shipping in France in the 1770s and 1780s, but the first functioning passenger paddle steamship was not developed until 1807, when Robert Fulton's *Clermont* began its service between New York City and Albany.²¹ The steamship's first application in warfare anywhere in the world, however, was during the First Anglo-Burmese War when the 130-ton steamship *Diana* bombarded Burmese shore positions. In 1826, Crawford, the British envoy to the Burmese court, took the *Diana* up the Irrawaddy, against the stream at a speed of six miles per hour, all the way to the royal capital, drawing the attention of Burmese villagers along the way, as “men, women, and children, without distinction, crowded to the bank, from curiosity to see the steam-vessel.”²² As Crawford observed on another occasion:

Although many of the inhabitants had seen the steam-vessel during the war, a more lively curiosity was evinced now, to view her under weigh, than I had ever before observed in any eastern people upon any occasion. The banks of the river, the boats, which were moored to the shore, the verandahs of houses, their tops, and many parts of the stockade, were crowded with people, anxious to see the spectacle.²³

After seeing the ship's puffs of smoke, Burmese observers used *mì*, or “fire,” to refer to steam,²⁴ hence permanently introducing into the Burmese language compounds such as *mì-sek* (fire + machine) for steam engine (and later electric generator) and *mì-thinbaw* (fire + ship) for steamship and providing the model for *mì-yatà* (fire + carriage), the Burmese word for steam locomotive, later in the century. Opportunities

20. Edward Judson, *Life of Adoniram Judson*, 199; Yule, *Narrative*, 109; Cox, *Journal*, 99, 96, 279; Browne, *Reminiscences*, 18; Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma*, 1.1, 75; Searle, *Burma Gazetteer*, 239; Hall, *Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence*, 63.

21. Dyson and Uhlig, *Great Inventions*, 203.

22. Crawford, *Journal*, 26.

23. *Ibid.*, 40.

24. One Burmese monk, for example, used this term in telling Eugenio Kincaid in 1835 about having seen the “fire ship” ten years earlier. Eugenio Kincaid, “Kincaid's Journal,” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.12 (December, 1836): 285.

for onboard visits and perusal of the ship's equipment were afforded by occasional stops for supplies or fuel. At one stop, a government tax collector boarded and was allowed to inspect the engine, after which the "gratified" young man observed, "it was as wonderful as the mechanism of a bee-hive." Court officials were also given a tour during which they spent three hours examining the vessel and its machinery. The Burmese court took an immediate interest in the steamship, beginning with Ba-gyi-daw, who watched its operation closely from his "water palace." His generals even snuck on board an English-speaking Burman in the guise of one of the many "native seamen" who served on British warships in Asia, evidently to listen in on conversations among officers and engineers to gain more information about the operation of the ship.²⁵

The Burmese court later commenced a long-term effort to acquire as many steamships as possible, for military and normal communications and transportation purposes. It reportedly obtained its first steamship in 1844 from a Calcutta merchant, although it is unclear what became of it, for Mindon stressed to Phayre in 1855 that "I would like to have a steamer of my own which I could send to different countries."²⁶ Mindon bought at least one more from an undisclosed source in the late 1850s and purchased three from Italy several years later. By the 1870s, the court had accumulated a fleet of eight to ten steamships, and, when a British fleet, including at least twenty-three steamships, sailed up the Irrawaddy against Mandalay in 1885, they found that the Burmese had twelve steamships and ten steam launches.²⁷

There does not appear to have been any attempt to actually produce a steamship locally in Burma. By contrast, the courts of both Vietnam and Siam made serious attempts to do so. The *Rattler*, a steamship that accompanied John Bowring's mission to Bangkok in 1855 (the *Sphinx*, another steamship that earlier accompanied the failed mission of James Brookes stuck on the bar and had made little impression on the Siamese), evoked the same excitement among the Siamese as the *Diana* had among the Burmese thirty years earlier.²⁸ Certainly, Siamese reactions to the craft, as

25. Crawford, *Journal*, 2, 23, 98, 171, 178, 333.

26. Yule, *Narrative*, 99.

27. Michael W. Charney, *Southeast Asian Warfare, 1300–1900* (Leiden: Brill, 2004): 254–55.

28. Nicholas Tarling, "The Bowring Mission: The Mellersh Narrative," *Journal of the Siam Society* 63.1 (January 1975): 105.

recorded by Captain A. Mellersh of the *Rattler*, appear remarkably similar to those of their Burmese counterparts of an earlier generation:

[The ministers] were very intelligent, and examined everything about the ship and engines with great minuteness asking very pertinent questions on every thing they saw; and displaying an amount of knowledge, certainly not inferior to that displayed by the average of English visitors to a ship at Spithead or the Nore. . . .²⁹

As Mellersh notes on another occasion:

I found some of the highest Nobles on board who evinced a great deal of knowledge of every thing they saw, and were very much gratified by seeing the engines put in motion expressly for them; as the ship was light they saw the working of the Screw and as I had a little model of it in the cabin they soon understood it perfectly.³⁰

Prince Chudamani—younger brother of King Mongkut, proficient in English, experienced in military affairs, installed as the "second king," and described by Mellersh as being "European in mind"—took the lead in attempting to acquire for the court knowledge about the functioning of the steamship. Chudamani applied his knowledge of mechanics and information he had gained on steamships to make a working model of a paddle steamer. As the impressed Mellersh observed "he understands more about a steam engine than I do, for I could not make a steam engine if I was to save my life."³¹ In the case of Vietnam, in the late 1830s, the Emperor Minh-mang purchased a steamship from the West, removed its engine, and attempted to copy the latter. Unlike Chudamani, Minh-mang's engineers failed. As Alexander Woodside explains, this was because the Vietnamese attempted to build their steamship independently of Western engineers and did not understand the general scientific principles, theories, or culture behind the operation or construction of the craft. After this failure, the Vietnamese court would only obtain additional steamships through purchase, and had obtained three by 1840.³²

29. *Ibid.*, 108.

30. *Ibid.*, 113.

31. *Ibid.*, 112, 120.

32. Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model*, 283–84.

Siam's success in adapting Western technology and institutions is widely seen as the result of Mongkut's policies which sought to placate the West rather than witness Siam repeating Burma's disasters with the English both in 1824–1826 and 1852–1853. Moreover, Siam had three additional decades to prepare for the arrival of the *Rattler* than Burma had for the *Diana*. From at least a temporal perspective, the fairest comparison is thus between Burma and Vietnam. Woodside argues that the Vietnamese inability to produce their own "technological breakthrough" regarding the steamship was their heritage of copying institutions from China in a "mechanical way," providing a poor model for imitating Western science.³³ The Burmese failure to produce their own steamships, however, may appear, at first sight, to be surprising. While Vietnamese leaders eschewed close relationships with Western advisers in the 1830s (although they had worked closely with them in the late eighteenth century), the Burmese court showed no such prejudice. The Burmese had also been producing Western-style ships for decades in shipyards at Syriam, Yangon, and elsewhere. Some of these ships were regarded as among the best in the world, particularly because of the strength of the teak of which Burma possessed vast reserves, as well as because of skilled craftsmanship. Nevertheless, the Burmese approach to Western mechanical devices was to purchase or otherwise obtain them, rather than to produce their own. While other societies, such as those of Siam, Vietnam, and the Malay World, proved to be adept at reproducing firearm technology throughout the early modern period, there is no evidence that the Burmese attempted to do so, at least to a significant degree.

One possible answer, derived from research on the history of firearms in Burma, taking into consideration the court's approach to Brahmanic priests, is that the Burmese court saw knowledge as one form of power that could be kept in the court's hands by isolating its circulation to a small group of specialists. As with Brahmanic priests who monopolized access to Sanskrit texts, the Burmese court attempted to keep knowledge about firearms out of the hands of the general population by relying on Eurasian war captives as its hereditary artillerymen and on the royal bodyguard at the court as its musketeers.³⁴ If this were also true of other examples of Western scientific knowledge until the 1830s, it would help to explain why the court showed little interest in encouraging Burmese to actually attempt to reproduce any of the steam engines the court eventually possessed. In

other words, the court seems to have preferred to have Westerners build steamships, which it could purchase exclusively, than to chance indigenous Burmese engineers spreading the knowledge of how to make steam engines to the general population. In the case of Burma, then, a reluctance to allow Western knowledge to make the transition to "local knowledge" was one obstacle to replicating Western machines.³⁵

The defeat of the Burmese court in 1826 and the new, though still moderate, openness to Western ideas and technology that ensued, encouraged limited but genuine attempts to transform Western scientific knowledge into local knowledge. These attempts were pioneering, rather than reflective of a clear change in the mood of the times toward "things Western." Among those most engaged with European learning of this period was a prince known as Makkara. Born as Maung Myò (1792–1848) and later entitled Min-yè-kyaw-swa, he was a son of Bò-daw-hpayà and was thus the uncle of two consecutive kings, Ba-gyi-daw and Thayawaddy (r. 1837–1846). "Makkara" was derived from his appanage of that name, located within the lands supervised by the governor of Pán-kyi, one of the two main governorships of the Lower Chindwin region.³⁶ Makkara displayed considerable and sustained interest in European learning. As Burney later observed of this highly intelligent man: "he evinces a very laudable desire of becoming acquainted with European science, and literature."³⁷ Although Mr. Rodgers, a port official in royal employ at Yangon, taught him how to read and comprehend written English, Makkara made slow progress in learning how to speak it, according to Westerners who conversed with him. One can imagine that even with instruction in reading English from Rodgers, complicated works, such as those on scientific subjects, would require further practice. This may explain why, on at least one occasion, Makkara first made certain that the language used in an English-language book presented to him as a gift "was plain" (uncomplicated by jargon) before accepting it.³⁸

Abraham Rees' great English compendium *The Cyclopaedia; or, Univer-*

35. James C. Scott views "local knowledge," however, as practical, "trial and error" knowledge not learned through books but through personal experience. See his *Seeing Like a State*, 316–19. The author would like to thank Atsuko Naono for pointing him to this reference. Local knowledge is used in the present study to refer to the local "field" of knowledge per se.

36. Tin, "Introduction," 30.

37. Burney, *Journal*, 59.

38. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14:7 (July 1834): 280; Burney, *Journal*, 59.

33. Ibid., 284.

34. Charney, *Southeast Asian Warfare, 1300–1900*, 68.

sal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature was, for the Burmese literati, the greatest collection of Western information within their grasp. First issued in the late eighteenth century, this collection grew in both scope and number of volumes through new editions. The edition that could be found in the Burmese royal court and in the private studies of some Burmese literati was the second edition printed in 1819, consisting of forty-five volumes, including thirty-nine volumes of alphabetized articles and six volumes of illustrations.³⁹ The *Cyclopaedia* covered all areas of European knowledge, from anatomy to zoology, world geography, European history, military terminology, and even an article on the "Birmhan Empire." These articles were the product of some of the best scientific minds of the day at a time when Europe was undergoing the industrial revolution. Thus, sitting on the shelves of the royal library at Amarapura was the most recent and fullest handbook on European learning then available.

The Scottish counterpart to the *Cyclopaedia* was the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Burmese literati had access to this work first. We know that in 1798, Symes provided Bò-daw-hpayà with a copy of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and a translation of one of the articles was made in Burmese. Ba-gyi-daw claimed in the 1830s, for example, that he had translations of much of its twenty-four volumes. Mindon also asked the Reverend Marks to send fifty of the Burmese pupils from his school in Yangon to translate the most recent edition into Burmese. The court focused on obtaining information from yet more great compendiums of learning, such as the *Cyclopaedia*.⁴⁰

Copies of the 1819 edition of the *Cyclopaedia* were available in Calcutta and British intermediaries provided them to the court as gifts or upon request. Ba-gyi-daw seems to have obtained his copy of the *Cyclopaedia* from Burney and Makkara obtained his through Charles Lane. Possessing the *Cyclopaedia* was one thing; making use of it was another. The scientific articles in the *Cyclopaedia* for which the Burmese displayed the most interest were composed in highly technical language for which most literati with an acquaintance with the English language were still poorly equipped.

39. Abraham Rees, comp., *The Cyclopaedia; or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819). Fortunately, a complete set of this specific edition of the *Cyclopaedia* is accessible at the Wellcome Library in London. The author was gratefully given access to this set by the Wellcome Library in 2003.

40. Symes, *Account*, 347–48, 353; John Marks, *Forty Years in Burma*, ed. W. C. B. Purser (London: Hutchinson, 1917), 179; Burney, *Journal*, 78.

Ba-gyi-daw relied on requests to Europeans knowledgeable in Burmese to provide translations of some of the most interesting articles. On one occasion, for example, Ba-gyi-daw asked Burney for a translation of the instructions to make "Chinese brilliant red fire," which he had been told was contained in the *Cyclopaedia* article "Pyrotechny." Burney made the translation and handed it to Ba-gyi-daw who then surprised him with a request that he translate the entire forty-five volumes of the *Cyclopaedia*.⁴¹ Burney does not appear to have taken up the assignment.

The *Cyclopaedia* did not satisfy Makkara's appetite for more Western books, particularly those on astronomy and botany. In August 1833, he received a book on both subjects from the American Baptist missionary Eugenio Kincaid. By that time, however, interest in such books had grown and European and American residents at the capital began to receive frequent visits from officials and officers of the Burmese court, probably encouraged by the excitement over the *Cyclopaedia* or by rumors of Makkara's pursuit of more Western information and books.⁴²

Until the early nineteenth century, the Burmese court relied heavily on members of the local Portuguese and Armenian communities as translators for their negotiations with Europeans. Few Burmese appear to have been able to read in European languages at a level sufficient to make use of the highly technical works that began to reach the court from the late eighteenth century. Aside from the occasional translation offered by European officers who visited the royal capital, most European knowledge thus sat on the other side of a linguistic barrier. There were some exceptions. One of the earliest indigenous attempts to translate European information into Burmese was by a Mon, Nei-myò-kyawdin-thi-ha-thu (born, ca. 1723), who was minister to the crown prince and later overall commander of Burmese armed levies in 1797. This minister bore an interest in the methods of English warfare. At some point, he acquired a copy of George Vertue's *The Heads of the Kings of England Proper for Mr. Rapin's History*.⁴³ As the title indicates this book of plates was produced to illustrate Paul de Rapin de Thoyras's famous *The History of England* volumes.⁴⁴ The minis-

41. Burney, *Journal*, 59, 78.

42. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.7 (July 1834): 280.

43. George Vertue, *The Heads of the Kings of England Proper for Mr. Rapin's History*, tr. N. Tindall (London, 1736).

44. Multiple editions of this work were produced between 1726 and 1731. One edition, possibly the one referred to here, was Paul de Rapin de Thoyras, *The History of England*, 2nd ed., 2 vols, tr. N. Tindall, London, 1732.

ter had scrawled in Burmese notes on the personalities of the rulers of England and other data on their images. Nei-myò-kyawdin-thi-ha-thu had the opportunity to test the accuracy of his notes when a Mr. Burnett visited him. Upon questioning Burnett, Nei-myò-kyawdin-thi-ha-thu "was much pleased" that his notes were accurate.⁴⁵

Makkara and other members of the literati realized that if they were to fully comprehend the European learning found in the *Cyclopaedia* and other works, they would need a command of English, rather than depend upon translations by Europeans into Burmese. As Makkara explained:

The English people search amongst different nations, having a great variety of customs, for only such branches of knowledge as are clearly apparent to the senses, which after collating, they collect and commit to writing; consequently, "great knowledge" will be much advanced by an acquaintance with the English language . . .⁴⁶

Moreover, to accurately translate the *Cyclopaedia*, Burmese literati needed a good English-Burmese dictionary. English dictionaries were available; one of the best of Makkara's day was Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* and Makkara certainly had a copy of it on his bookshelf. Makkara also had a copy of Walker's *Dictionary*. The few available Burmese and English dictionaries, however, remained unsatisfactory. The missionary, Dr. Adoniram Judson, had compiled an early dictionary in 1820, which, as Judson admitted, was "exceedingly imperfect." He did not begin work on his better known and more comprehensive *English-Burmese Dictionary* until 1842 and it was not completed until 1848. Its companion volume, the *Burmese-English Dictionary* was still not complete upon Judson's death in 1850, only being finished through the efforts of E. A. Stevens in 1852. Makkara had obtained the manuscript of a small English-Burmese dictionary that Dr. Jonathan Price had begun decades earlier, but had left incomplete on his death.⁴⁷

Makkara thus asked Lane to aid him in producing a useful dictionary, making use of Price's manuscript, which would help Burmese to make use

45. Cox, *Journal*, 211–12, 369.

46. Lane, *Dictionary*, "Introduction."

47. Adoniram Judson, preface to *Judson's Burmese-English Dictionary* (Rangoon: Baptist Board of Publications, 1953); Thomas Simons, "Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Simons at Rangoon," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.12 (December 1836): 281.

of English texts. Makkara worked with Lane for about three years on an English and Burmese dictionary.⁴⁸ The completed work, *A Dictionary, English and Burmese*, was begun in 1833. Although completed (and used) by 1834, it was only published in 1841 under Lane's name. Makkara's contribution was summarized in small print on the front-page: "The whole of the Burmese portion [was] carefully revised by his Highness the Prince of Mekhara, Uncle to the then Reigning King of Burmah."⁴⁹ As Makkara explained of the utility of the work:

in order that all Burman people, who have a desire for "great knowledge," may have the benefit of understanding the English language by means of the Burman language, the Prince of Mekhara desire Mr. Lane to translate the English Dictionary into the Burman language. By using this Dictionary . . . as a guide, having first merely learnt sufficient of the English characters as to be able to read, and by noting the context, the 45 volumes of the Arts and Sciences [Rees' *Cyclopaedia*], and other English Books may be understood by means of the Burman language.⁵⁰

With his manuscript copy of the dictionary in hand, Makkara began his own, Burmese translations of the *Cyclopaedia*. Among the first articles that Makkara translated were those on eclipses and hailstones.⁵¹

On the one hand, Makkara, in his excitement regarding the *Cyclopaedia*, shared with the Lower Chindwin literati of the previous generation a dissatisfaction with accepting information provided to them at face value and a strong determination to determine "correct" knowledge. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the Lower Chindwin literati pursued "absolute truth," that is, they believed that there were basic facts regarding history, religion, the world, and so on that one could and should know, if one persisted in looking for them. On the other hand, Makkara, and others of his generation, and fellow Lower Chindwin man Gaung, mentioned earlier, sought more than "knowing." Rather, these literati sought to "understand" the underlying processes and principles that made the world what it was. The *Cyclopaedia* helped fertilize this interest. Its articles were more

48. Burney, *Journal*, 60; Thomas Simons, "Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Simons at Rangoon," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.12 (December 1836): 281.

49. Lane, *Dictionary*, i.

50. *Ibid.*, introduction.

51. Burney, *Journal*, 60.

than descriptive; they contained information on how to calculate the eclipses and how hailstones formed.⁵²

It seems likely that mathematics played the most important role in initially convincing Makkara that there was an unseen order to the natural world, that nature and science were systematic and not phenomenal. Sanskrit texts on mathematics had been imported from India by Hsin-pyushin and Bò-daw-hpayà, but the Brahman priests in the court who were territorial about their role as court astronomers and keepers of Indian learning monopolized these. While Shin Nyanabhivamsa had played a role in translating some of the Sanskrit texts, it does not appear that he read or translated the mathematical texts among them. Lane, Makkara's Western collaborator on his dictionary project, however, helped Makkara acquire a knowledge of logarithms and Makkara then turned to the task of learning algebra. Armed with the ability to make complex calculations, Makkara quickly looked for ways to apply this new skill to the properties of nature. Makkara acquired some Western scientific tools, hanging items such as a barometer and thermometer on the wall in his room, and he sought help among Westerners to learn how to use the barometer himself. Makkara also began to attempt to understand how the instruments themselves were able to make the calculations that they did as well as to learn the reasons behind the polarization of the needle, the return of comets, as well as the longitudes and latitudes of major world cities, such as Bangkok, Calcutta, London, and, of course, Ava. Soon, Makkara's own knowledge of Western science outstripped that of even the most learned of the Europeans who met him, such as Burney, who was unable to answer the prince's questions regarding the polarization of light.⁵³ As Burney described Makkara's growing awareness: "I was with him for upwards of an hour, and he put questions to me as fast as I could answer them, and then observed that he had not asked me one hundredth part of the questions which he wished to ask."⁵⁴ Reports of Makkara's engagement with Western learning ultimately transcended the borders of the kingdom, leading to his election as an honorary member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, based in Calcutta, in 1836.⁵⁵

52. Ibid., 60.

53. Ibid., 60, 112.

54. Ibid., 59.

55. D. G. E. Hall, "Henry Burney: Diplomat and Orientalist," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 41 (December 1958): 109.

Learning Observed

One of the appeals of European learning in the form of data collected in the field was that its space and time were compressed. It was both here and now. Although encyclopedias and dictionaries provided a compendium of European learning at the time of publication, European learning, being empirical, was always changing. More importantly, the act of learning could be observed. Many of the early European travelers and envoys in Burma were learned men themselves, some being medical doctors, linguists, mineralogists, and a range of other specialists used by European governments and trading companies to gather information as well as to make treaties. They thus took down copious notes, made sketches, and asked questions. Moreover, as Burmese were participants in this process of learning, they watched with interest the ways in which Europeans processed new information and how they represented what they had seen or heard.

The process of intellectual consumption differed between those literati who focused on the old learning and those who accepted, though not completely, the new European learning. The latter were usually involved in an interactive process with living people, though sometimes this involved texts, while for the former, the interactive process was limited to texts. Certainly, at one level, the act of translation from Sanskrit and Pali into Burmese is an important interactive process. As Alton L. Becker has explained, a translator engages with the text and is unable to escape the problems of exuberances and deficiencies. Words in different languages being different complexes of meanings, without complete equivalencies, the act of translation necessarily involves adding some meaning, which is not in the original, and using some words that do not give the full power intended in the original.⁵⁶ At a different, perhaps more mundane level, Lower Chindwin literati and other old learners worked with Sanskrit and Pali texts in the absence of their authors. Those who came into personal contact with Europeans, however, interacted with them in an immediate way, simultaneously sharing their knowledge with Europeans while Europeans shared their knowledge with them. Thus, to a significant extent, the production of knowledge about each other was both a simultaneous and a shared project.

56. Alton L. Becker, *Writing on the Tongue* (Ann Arbor: Centers for South and Southeast Asia Studies, 1989), 1-5.

Social gatherings between Europeans and Burmese were frequently laboratories for shared learning. At one evening gathering in his home, for example, Mìn-hla-naw-rahta introduced his friends, other important government officials, to Francis Buchanan, and drew their attention to his work on botany. The Burmese were already interested in plants for the important properties for which they were used in indigenous medicine. The Burmese examined Buchanan's paintings of some of these plants and were able to identify them using the Burmese terminology.⁵⁷ Buchanan, a scholar of linguistics as well as of natural science, probably learned as much from this meeting as the Burmese did. Another example would be that of a later successor of Mìn-hla-naw-rahta, Mìn-yè-nanda-meit, who became Governor of Hanthawaddy, which included Yangon, in 1810. He not only entertained European men of science and medicine in his home, but visited them as well. Keenly interested in European medicine, he introduced several European missionaries to the Burmese cremation ceremony when his sister died in June 1810. Afterwards, he surprised the missionary and medical doctor, Felix Carey, by visiting his house, along with his usual armed retinue, mainly to see Carey's surgical instruments. "Highly gratified," the governor treated Carey as a favorite.⁵⁸

Both the Burmese and the Europeans were self-aware that each was learning of and forming opinions about the other. Burmese literati were thus especially interested in what Europeans were learning about them. Mindon, for example, showed an interest in Western knowledge of the Burmese language.⁵⁹ One court minister also was "amused" by the publication of his portrait in Snodgrass' *Burmese War* in 1827.⁶⁰ A lower-ranking commandant (Maung Shwe-lu) of one of the royal gates was also pleased "that his name was in print in our books and that it was held in high respect by every civilized nation."⁶¹

For the court, the provision of texts to Europeans required careful consideration. The royal court had begun supplying texts to foreign visitors in

57. Symes, *Account*, 267.

58. Pearn, "Burma Diary of 1810," 295, 296; Royal Order of 26 February 1810.

59. Burney, *Journal*, 53–54.

60. Burney went to see the "Kyì" chief minister and, as he explains, "I took with me Snodgrass's *Burmese War* and showed the frontispiece to him, and he was much amused at seeing this picture of himself." Burney, *Journal*, 55. The full citation for the book referred to is Major Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War* (London: J. Murray, 1827).

61. Burney, *Journal*, 56.

the 1790s. According to one account, however, there was also a royal order or understanding that indigenous texts could not be given to foreigners without royal or ministerial approval. Thus, when foreigners, such as Buchanan, began to purchase manuscripts, they found that vendors only did so with a considerable degree of secrecy. The price was also significantly higher than normal due to the danger of prosecution. One wonders if this was in reality simply a cunning sales practice. In any event, after hearing of this, Bò-daw-hpayà submitted the matter to his attending monks. They informed him that in the case of works on history and law not only was it legal to sell books to foreigners, but that it should be encouraged for the "dissemination of knowledge." Bò-daw-hpayà then sent a copy of an unspecified chronicle, probably Kalà's *Great Chronicle*, and a *dhammathat* from the royal library to Symes. A half century later, in addition to supplying visiting Europeans with both historical and doctrinal works, including the nine volumes of the *Dipavamsa*, King Mindon went so far as to test such men as Phayre on their knowledge of the complicated details the texts contained.⁶²

Geography

Thongchai Winichakul, in his *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation*, demonstrates that nineteenth-century Siamese had many spatial conceptions that were applicable to different contexts. Coastal maps, for example, rendered space differently than land maps, just as the Buddhist Traiphum cosmography viewed the positions of time, space, and society differently than the Western maps that eventually predominated in Siam by the end of the century. The indigenous acceptance of multiple ways of viewing space helps to explain why Western maps were accepted so quickly in Siam, as one way of viewing the world. This was also the case of Burma, although at a slower pace. While the transition Winichakul discusses occurred from the 1860s, long after Western ideas had begun to become accepted by Siamese elites, this process happened three decades earlier in Burma, where Burmese language maps, globes, and geographies became

62. Symes, *Account*, 421–22; Phayre's official letter to the Government of India, 9 October 1855, Hall, *Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence*, 389; Marks, *Forty Years in Burma*, 275–76; When Phayre met Mindon, Mindon asked him detailed questions on the Mingala Thoot (a sermon by Gautama Buddha with thirty-eight rules of life). Hall, *Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence*, 384.

commonplace among literati and especially in the royal court, from the 1830s.⁶³

As in Siam, the initial carriers of Western geographic knowledge in Burma were Baptist missionaries. They were frequently disappointed that their efforts to discuss Christianity and distribute Christian tracts were thwarted when Burmese refused to discuss the relative merits of Buddhism and Christianity and engage only in discourse on natural science, geography, and technology. As Kincaid observed of one party of Burmese officials who visited his house in July 1833: "They professed great anxiety to know more of Geography and Astronomy, but had no wish to investigate the subject of religion."⁶⁴

Astronomy had been a major fixture of the Sanskrit learning established in Bò-daw-hpayà's court in the late eighteenth century. Although Bò-daw-hpayà remained dissatisfied with calendrical calculations throughout his reign, the hegemony he had granted to Brahmin astrologers as a specialized knowledge community in command of knowledge about astronomy remained unquestioned into the 1820s. Brahmin astrologers had reigned supreme in this area of learning in Siam as well, until Mongkut, as Winichakul explains, combined his knowledge of indigenous astrology and Western ideas of astronomy to challenge the reliability of his court astrologers at Wako on 18 August 1868. In the episode described by Winichakul, the occurrence of a full eclipse, as predicted by Mongkut, finally demonstrated that Western learning about astronomy was correct, especially when the court astrologers in Bangkok could not explain the eclipse.⁶⁵ In the case of Burma, however, there is no close parallel to the event at Wako. Certainly, Bò-daw-hpayà had asked Rodgers to compete with his Brahmin astrologers in predicting a solar eclipse, sending Rodgers in a rush home to consult his copy of the *Bengal Almanack*, which contained such calculations. Nevertheless, no apparent change occurred because of the information Rodgers' subsequently conveyed.⁶⁶ More than anything else, Rodgers' experience indicated that into the early nineteenth century, the Burmese court was willing to listen to what Europeans had to

63. Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 20–61.

64. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.7 (July 1834): 277.

65. Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 46.

66. Henry Gouger, *Personal Narrative of Two Years' Imprisonment in Burmah* (London: John Murray, 1860), 98–99.

say, but were not yet convinced that there were compelling reasons to reject the Sanskrit learning emphasized by Nyanabhivamsa's generation of literati and established as court orthodoxy under Bò-daw-hpayà.

Among those Burmese, such as Bò-daw-hpayà's son Makkara, who began to recognize that there was much of value in Western learning that could not be answered through the Sanskrit learning, acceptance was rapid. Makkara even sought to share the results of his interrogation of Western science with his children, seven daughters and at least two sons. At his request, Kincaid frequently sent scientific works, along with Christian texts, for Makkara's children, especially his two eldest daughters, to read. During a visit by Kincaid to Makkara's house on 28 May 1835, Makkara used this opportunity to display his knowledge of the solar system in front of a Westerner by explaining how it worked to three of his children. After discussing the earth's diurnal and annual revolutions, he turned to Kincaid and asked about extra-terrestrials:

MAKKARA: What do you think about the planets being inhabited?

KINCAID: There is much reason to believe they are inhabited.

MAKKARA: And what reasons do you give?

KINCAID: From the best observations they appear to be fitted up with just as much design for the support and comfort of created beings, as the earth we inhabit, and it is difficult to conceive why they were created unless it was to be the abode of intelligent beings.⁶⁷

Makkara agreed that Kincaid was correct. This was an important step because thus far Makkara had accepted Western learning because of its ability to explain the physical properties of things he could see. In other words, Makkara had come to accept the validity of observational science. With acceptance of Western learning at one level, Makkara grew more confident that Western learning, as presented to him by the missionary, was probably correct about a great many other things, even those he could not see. Uncertain of the limits of Western learning, missionaries did not make clear to Makkara and others where the boundaries between Western empiricism and religious faith were, or, indeed, whether or not they existed at all. Moreover, few Westerners could inform Burmese otherwise, due to the hegemony that early Western missionaries enjoyed as the main

67. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.7 (July 1836): 162.

intermediaries of Western learning during the early 1830s. As a result, Burmese such as Makkara would remain unaware of the controversies in Europe and America over the Western learning that missionaries presented as a monolithic, unproblematized system of knowledge. Certainly, Makkara had no way of knowing that many Westerners of the 1830s, as remains the case today, would have immediately rejected the possibility of extra-terrestrials out of hand.

Some Burmese remained skeptical of Western views of the solar system well into the mid-nineteenth century. Ū Baw, better known as the "Magwè" chief minister, was the "most intellectual" of Mindon's ministers and, like Makkara, was interested in the solar system. Baw put Phayre to some inconvenience as a result of Phayre's explanation of the Copernican theory that the "sun was the center of the solar system and that the earth moved around it." Not willing to accept this notion, Baw stubbornly defended the Mount Myinmo theory that held to the Hindu-Buddhist conception of the universe in which four great islands pivoted around a great central mountain called Mount Myinmo (in Burmese Buddhist terminology or Mount Meru in Hindu thought). Rather than attempting to break off the discussion on these grounds, Baw was still interested in learning more of Phayre's Western theory. Evidently not confident that his command of English allowed him a full understanding of Phayre's discussion, he had Phayre summon Thomas Spears, an Englishman who had lived many years in Burma and was fluent in Burmese, to explain his own view of the solar system in Baw's own language. When Spears had done so, he gave essentially the same account as Phayre.⁶⁸

The disagreement over the nature of the solar system revealed some of the tensions between religious and Western scientific knowledge as well as those between indigenous and European learning. Baw and Phayre disagreed about where authority for understanding the solar system rested. Baw stressed that the Burmese account of the solar system was correct because it was carefully described in authoritative religious (Pali) treatises: "It is spoken of in our sacred books, and its height is given, and the inhabitants of each region are known exactly." Phayre sought to circumvent the authority of the religious texts in this matter by arguing that this kind of knowledge belonged to scientific works, not to religious ones. As Yule remembered the debate: "Phayre endeavored to pacify him [Baw] by say-

68. Yule, *Narrative*, 68, 100, 245; Phayre, "Private Journal," 79.

ing that we considered these subjects pertaining to science, and not as a portion of our religious books." As the lines between European and Burmese thinking became sharper, another Burmese minister joined the argument to support Baw, attempting to undercut the European "scientific" argument by pointing to what appeared to the Burmese to be the ridiculous account, found in one of the European scientific works, that bees were organized into workers and soldiers under a queen bee. At this point, Baw laughed and jokingly admonished Spears for having lived so long with the Burmese but nonetheless turning so quickly against them with the appearance of a fellow Englishman. If there had been any doubt that this was, or became seen as, a contest between European and indigenous learning, this was dispelled when Phayre explained that his views were shared by "All European nations; the English, French, Russians, Portuguese, Americans," all, Baw observed, "the white foreigners." Baw determined to test Phayre's differentiation between the religious and the scientific in European learning by asking for the opinion of the Catholic priest, Father Abbona, who presumably confirmed Phayre's views.⁶⁹

Certain Western learning tools made substantial contributions to the emerging European-Burmese discourse on the earth and its place in the solar system. World maps were new to the Burmese. Cephas Bennett and Adoniram Judson had produced some of the first maps of the world for distribution to the Burmese partly because the missionaries believed that a "correct knowledge of geography" was necessary for understanding the Bible. As early as 1829, Judson had prepared, in addition to world maps, several focused specifically on Palestine, the site of the Holy Land, and on countries referred to in the New Testament. Place names, as would be the case in 1833 with Bennett's globe and the *Worcester Outline Maps* that Bennett filled out with Burmese names, were rendered into Burmese and spelled out in Burmese characters.⁷⁰

The new process of lithography aided Judson, Bennett, and others. Before the nineteenth century, illustration printing relied on the relief and intaglio processes. In the relief process, the surface of a block was chipped away at until only the intended image remained in elevation, which alone would leave its imprint on the page. The intaglio process entailed doing

69. Yule, *Narrative*, 68; Phayre, "Private Journal," 79.

70. Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, "Report of the Board for the Year ending April 24, 1833," *American Baptist Magazine* 13.6 (June 1833): 217; Cephas Bennett, "Mr. Bennett's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.10 (October, 1834): 396.

the reverse; the image would be cut into a surface and ink would be retained only in the grooves when the printer wiped the surface. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, printers began to adopt lithography, which was a planographic process (the entire surface is relatively flat). Lithography allowed printing from a porous stone plate (made of limestone, zinc, or other material) on which the illustration was drawn in chalk or crayon. Water, splashed on the plate, would be absorbed by the area of the limestone not included in the illustration and repelled by the area of the illustration. When oily ink was then rolled over the plate, the water-soaked parts of the limestone would repel the ink and cling to the chalk or wax and only this latter part would leave an imprint on the paper. Since it removed the need to carve out the printing surface and was more easily corrected if a mistake were to have been made, it marked a substantial improvement over both the intaglio and relief processes. Thus, lithography made the printing of large quantities of complex illustrations possible. A lithographic press was available in Calcutta, at least by the early 1830s. Bennett had his Burmese maps of the world printed there in 1831 and Judson used it to produce one thousand copies of each of his maps for distribution in Burma shortly after.⁷¹

One of those who received Bennett's world map was the influential governor of Hanthawaddy (known to the British as the governor of Yangon, which fell under his authority), the fifty-one-year-old Û Khaing. Bennett and fellow missionary Jonathan Wade had taken the map to Khaing's house and showed it to both Khaing and an assistant minister (*wun-dauk*) entitled Maha-min-htin-kyaw. Khaing, clearly interested, unfolded it in his lap while Bennett bent forward to explain details on the map. Taking Bennett's movement to be genuflection, the old governor demonstrated the respect Burmese have for those who are sharing knowledge with them by climbing out of his chair and sitting on the floor, leading Bennett and Maha-min-htin-kyaw to do the same, also out of respect. Khaing expressed satisfaction that the map used Burmese script and proceeded to

71. Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, "Report of the Board for the Year ending April 24, 1833," 217; Jonathan Wade, "Journal of Rev. Mr. Wade," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 13.2 (February, 1833): 77; Peter Murray Jones, "Introduction," in *The Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages: An Account of the Development and Progress of the Art of Illumination, As a Distinct Branch of Pictorial Ornamentation, From the IVth to the XVIIth Centuries*, ed. Henry Noel Humphreys, 2 (London: Bracken Books, 1989); "Color Printing in the Nineteenth Century: Lithography," <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/color/lithogr.htm>

make extensive comments on geography which impressed upon Bennett both his extensive knowledge and interest in the subject.⁷²

Judson had printed his Burmese-language *Catechism of Geography* in 1827, initially as a text for mission schools in Burma. Consisting of eighty-nine questions and answers, including a world map with Burmese names, it was soon distributed more generally to elucidate further Western knowledge of geography. In July 1833, the book had evidently created a stir among the Burmese when Shwe returned from his mission to the British governor-general at Calcutta.⁷³ As discussed at the beginning of the present chapter, Shwe had visited Bodhgaya and the Mahabodhi Temple during the embassy's stay. In addition to the account written of the embassy, Shwe also brought back a map of Bodhgaya that characterized the environs of the temple in agreement with the predominant Burmese Buddhist texts, which was not in consonance with the description found in Judson's geography or in another of his works, *The Balance*. As Bennett, who was in Yangon at the time, remembered: "Many things he relates that he has seen, are right in the teeth of assertions in Mr. Judson's *Balance*. The latter says they are not, the former that they are, in existence."⁷⁴

The issue involved different perceptions of space, not easily reducible to two views, one indigenous and one Western, as discussed by Winichakul for the case of Siam. Rather it depended upon the different purposes to which geography and geographical representation were put. Shwe appears to have produced two different views of his mission to Bengal. In one, his journal of the embassy, he provides an account of Calcutta, his visits to the Company's mint, the British aquarium, a cotton mill in Fort Gloucester, and other details a Western (and indeed a Burmese) official would expect from an official journal of a mission. This was intended as a record for the royal court and possibly for the use of later missions.⁷⁵ Shwe's special trip to Bodhgaya, however, was intended as a religious pilgrimage and he applied to the Mahabodhi temple and its environs a "cultural" map reflecting the Burmese perception of Mahabodhi as it existed in Burmese

72. Cephas Bennett, "Mr. Bennett's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 15.3 (March 1835): 112; Jonathan Wade, "Journal of Rev. Mr. Wade," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 13.2 (February, 1833): 78.

73. Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, "Report of the Board of Managers, for the Year Ending April 29, 1829," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* (June 1829): 192; Kyan, "Twan: San," 31-32.

74. Cephas Bennett, "Mr. Bennett's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.9 (September 1834): 354.

75. Kyan, "Twan: San," 33.

religious and historical texts. One wonders as well if Judson or other missionaries would have had the appropriate registers to read aspects of the temple, such as the seven stations, as an educated Burmese would, or shared a prior text in the form of the Mahabodhi replica and the seven stations at both Pagan and Pegu.

Not understanding the multiplicity of indigenous spatial conceptions, Westerners would continue to ridicule Burmese understandings of geography, while learned Burmese proved far more accepting of the former's geography as one way among many to comprehend space. The Judson-Shwe stir drew attention from Khaing. Khaing had recently read Judson's geography and, in an effort to learn if other Westerners shared the views contained in it, he belabored numerous visiting sea captains as to Judson's veracity. Khaing was apparently persuaded that even if Shwe was not incorrect, at the very least, Western geography was an alternative way of viewing the world and continued to pursue more information from Westerners about "their" geography.⁷⁶

The production and distribution of Western maps quickly drew the court's interest. In August 1833, a royal secretary called on Kincaid and talked with him for two hours in order to secure a map, rejecting the missionary's offer of a Christian book as well. In July 1835, another missionary, Thomas Simons, presented another map, one of the solar system, to Khaing as a "gift" to ensure the latter's grant of a permit to go to the royal capital. Simons apparently also shared a copy of the same map with one of the royal astronomers, who then began to ask the missionary about the "formation of the world."⁷⁷

Burmese were accustomed to books and rudimentary maps, but were far less familiar with globes. Although a few globes had found their way to the royal capital by 1797, Cox notes the presence of at least one in the house of the "Mi" chief minister, few early nineteenth century Burmese appear to have seen them. A new series of globes arrived in Lower Burma, brought or fashioned by missionaries, in the early 1830s. On 25 January 1834, Bennett and Abner Webb together visited Khaing. Bennett brought as a present a rough globe, "rather imperfect," that he had made himself. Bennett's globe was an odd-looking object and perhaps would have been initially unrecog-

76. Cephas Bennett, "Mr. Bennett's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 15.3 (March 1835): 112; 14.5 (May 1834): 197; 14.10 (October, 1834): 395.

77. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.7 (July 1834): 279; Thomas Simons, "Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Simons at Rangoon," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.11 (November 1836): 263; 16.12 (December 1836): 282.

nizable to many Westerners. Bennett, either due to a lack of a variety of inks or in an attempt to dazzle Khaing, had used gold leaf to represent land mass and black ink to represent water. One can easily imagine that the contrast of the shiny gold against a black surface made for an initially startling, even disturbing display. Khaing was impressed with the globe and immediately began to spin it, turning it to Burma. As Bennett describes the following exchange:

[Khaing] "Burmah is on the top, and America under." I replied, "Yes, but by-and-by, when night comes, then Burmah will be under, and America at the top;" at which he burst into a hearty laugh, and was joined by those who were sitting around. Being of rather a humorous disposition, he made his remark evidently as a joke, and seemed much pleased that the laugh was against him.⁷⁸

In this amiable atmosphere, Khaing felt at ease asking his Western visitors further questions on geography, especially concerning the direction in which the world revolved. Thus, the three dimensional globe had raised questions on physics in a way that a two dimensional map could not. As Bennett confirmed: "They [the Burmese] understand a globe, or can be made to understand it very easily."⁷⁹

The globe's popularity and the curiosity it encouraged, would remain an important tool for the transmission of Western knowledge to the Burmese, especially since the missionaries had made a sincere effort to "localize" the globe by making place names comprehensible to the Burmese, whether or not the latter were familiar with English. Bennett's globe, for example, used Burmese characters to letter in the names of places. Bennett had recommended that Wade have several such globes made in the United States in 1833, to give to Ba-gyi-daw, Khaing, and Christian mission stations and schools operating in Burma, but this plan does not appear to have been taken up.⁸⁰ Thus, Bennett had made his own and, for some time, it remained the only Burmese-language globe in the world. This strange globe, however, might have remained a small oddity, lost in Khaing's large personal collection, for he was an avid collector of

78. Cephas Bennett, "Mr. Bennett's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 15.3 (March 1835): 112.

79. Cephas Bennett, "Mr. Bennett's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.5 (May 1834): 197.

80. Ibid.

things Western, if he had not been so well connected. Despite being posted at Yangon, far from the royal capital, his daughter was one of Ba-gyi-daw's queens and his chief wife lived at the capital "as a pledge, according to custom, for his loyalty."⁸¹ According to Crawford, Khaing's chief wife, noted by Burney in the early 1830s for having a house that was "better furnished with articles of European manufacture than any other house we have seen,"⁸² exercised an enormous influence over the king, who referred to her as the "female governor." Moreover, not only was Khaing the governor of Hanthawaddy (including Yangon), he had also been an interior minister in the Privy Council in the early 1820s, with the intimate relationship with the king and other members of the royal family, certainly with Makkara, that this position entailed.⁸³

Among literati at the royal capital, Makkara obtained some of the first examples of the new generation globes. He had purchased several from Westerners in the mid-1830s, along with scientific books. Other members of the court, including princes, sent their attendants to Westerners with requests for such globes.⁸⁴ Kincaid also used the opportunity of visits by royal attendants to show them his globes and explain to them "the true system of geography." This was convincing to some, but not to others. While one attendant reportedly commented "you white foreigners can excel us by your knowledge of science, but not in religion," another retorted, according to Simons' paraphrasing, "if [I] was ever brought to believe [geography] to be so, it must be with a drawn sword over [my] head."⁸⁵

Although Westerners were able to distribute maps in mass quantities in the 1830s, the technology was not yet available, anywhere, for sophisticated color illustration. Before the 1840s, the only reliable method of coloring printed illustrations was by hand. Bennett's world maps, those he had distributed to the Burmese in 1832, were merely outlines, for they were unshaded, and he had to shade in the map with a brush and add his own color to separate islands from oceans and to render differentiation among

81. Crawford, *Journal*, 13.

82. Burney, *Journal*, 56.

83. Crawford, *Journal*, 12–13.

84. Thomas Simons, "Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Simons at Rangoon," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.12 (December 1836): 281; Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *American Baptist Missionary Press* 14.7 (July 1834): 284.

85. Thomas Simons, "Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Simons at Rangoon," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.12 (December 1836): 282–83.

countries. The lack of mechanical color printing would also explain the "colored" and shaded map given to a grateful royal prince by Kincaid in October 1833. From the 1840s, however, experimentation with lithography led to the introduction of methods to incorporate a large number of tints, in a process known as chromolithography, which dramatically improved the aesthetic appeal of Western mass publications.⁸⁶

Western missionaries, in pursuing their own religious agenda, in effect showcased on a regular basis new generations of state-of-the-art Western graphic technology. This encouraged Burmese to add Western spatial concepts and methods to their field of geographical representations. Western cartography and surveying, for example, soon followed Western maps. While Burmese had used rough plans for building towns in the past, square grids, triangulation, and a range of other surveying techniques filtered into Burmese city planning. One of the earliest examples of this was a city plan (ca. 1855) for the construction of Mandalay. The fieldwork necessary to fix positions and record the accurate measurements necessary for the plan was both methodical and enormous. Some scholars have estimated that the recorded measurements include some 2,757 kilometers of line. The resulting survey was drawn to scale in five colors on a large sheet of parabai (2.29 meters x 1.45 meters) along a rectangular grid, each side of the square measuring 3.18 centimeters, forming a cell of 10.08 square centimeters. This was far more sophisticated than earlier maps and allowed for a more accurate and systematic approach to the construction of towns.⁸⁷

As the Burmese became intimately familiar with Western learning and its technology, as we have seen with maps and globes, European knowledge gradually lost its mystique. Of course, there were still "mysterious" things about Western knowledge, but the literati and the throne were aware by the mid-nineteenth century that, given access and time, almost anything Europe had was learnable and could be appropriated. They also realized that Burmese learning was just as mysterious to the Europeans as Western learning had been to themselves. What was so surprising was that very few Europeans, almost without exception, were willing to go beyond

86. Jonathan Wade, "Journal of Rev. Mr. Wade," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 13.2 (February, 1833): 77; Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *American Baptist Missionary Press* 14.7 (July 1834): 284; Jones, "Introduction," 2.

87. Maung Maung Tin and Thomas Owen Morris, "Mindon Min's Development Plan for the Mandalay Area," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 49.1 (June 1966): 30–32.

studying the anatomy of Burmese knowledge, its structure and language, and apply what they learned from it for their own benefit. The Burmese persisted in attempting to get European visitors to take the lessons of Burmese learning to heart anyway, as indicated in the following conversation between Phayre and King Mindon:

MINDON: "Do you know Burmese writing or literature?"

PHAYRE: "I do somewhat, your Majesty."

MINDON: "... Have you read the 'Mengula-Thoot'?"

PHAYRE: "I have your Majesty."

MINDON: "Do you know the meaning of it?"

PHAYRE: "I do. I have read the Burmese interpretation of it."

MINDON: "How many precepts does it contain?"

PHAYRE: "thirty-eight."

MINDON: "Do you remember them?"

PHAYRE: "I am sorry to say, your Majesty, it is so long since I learnt the Mengula-Thoot, that I cannot repeat it now."

[With that, Mindon] "repeated some of the precepts of this discourse against pride, anger, evil associates, and the like. He continued for [a] full five minutes or more, commenting on and enforcing the rules contained in the sermon."⁸⁸

Phayre attributed his failings to politeness and an eagerness not to make mistakes, which may or may not be true. In either case, such Burmese learning was not included in Phayre's histories, space given instead to "hard" data, the dates and events of Burmese history. As we will see in chapter 10, Western learning would have a bigger impact on the Burmese of Mindon's and Thibaw's reigns, in large part because sincere attempts by some literati to make sense of it intersected with royal attempts to apply it for the benefit of the throne.

88. Yule, *Narrative*, 96–97.



The New Information Technology

As discussed in the previous chapter, Western learning was beginning to draw the attention of some among the Burmese literati in the 1830s. The Burmese court was curious about the new learning as well and generally welcomed new Western technology and its mediators. This tolerance may have been due in part to the fact that the Burmese who engaged in a thorough study of Western learning, such as Makkara, remained few in number. Western missionaries played the predominant role in technology transfer in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Burmese court quickly found that its participation in this transfer of the technological aspects of Western learning “opened the gates” to a deeper missionary agenda, one that entailed an intellectual assault on Buddhism and a determined attempt to replace it with Christianity.¹ Western maps and globes, as we have seen, introduced to the Burmese additional ways to view geographic space and the physical properties of the earth and the universe. Missionaries presented the new geography as proof that Burmese spatial concepts were wrong and, by extension, that Buddhism itself was a “false doctrine.”

At the root of the missionary view of indigenous learning was the belief

1. These missionaries were well aware of why the court's antagonism would be aroused. As the missionary Abner Webb explained to readers back in New England in 1835: “We have come with an express design, to destroy their religion, and we tell them so distinctly, and all their idol hopes we call vain. The very things they doat on, we call sin. What they rely on, as their salvation, we say will prove their ruin. Their heaven, we say, does not exist, and their sacred books we prove before their eyes a falsehood [so we should expect opposition] . . . From Rangoon to Ava, tracts have been scattered and read, disproving their sacred things. More than 30 thousand of these books have been given in Rangoon alone . . .” Abner Webb, “Extract of a Letter from Mr. Webb to Dr. L. Bolles, Dated 12 March 1835,” *Baptist Missionary Press* 15.11 (November 1835): 446.

that the "Burmese mind" could not appreciate Western learning, technological or otherwise, because Buddhism, to the missionaries an absurd, backward system of belief, prevented them from doing so. In order to liberate the Burmese intellect, missionaries would make the Burmese "free thinkers" through the inherent truth of Christianity. This view created tensions between the missionaries, on the one hand, and Burmese monastic and lay literati, on the other. The latter were not unique in their irritation. C. A. Bayly observes of indigenous reactions to missionaries in nineteenth-century India that Indians were not opposed to the introduction of Western technology per se, but rather to the missionary propaganda that associated this technology, "the visible sources of British success," with Christianity.²

The Printing Press

Among all the technology introduced by Westerners into Burma, the printing press created the most serious tensions between the Burmese and the Baptist missionaries. While other technology could be easily localized, the printing press served not only as the most important technological tool of Christian missionizing but also remained very nearly a Baptist monopoly in Burma in the 1820s and early 1830s. Burmese references to the printing press only emerged during the 1810s, despite Burma's proximity to and substantial intercourse with China and the antiquity of the Chinese printing press. The Chinese had invented block printing by the early sixth century at the latest and the alchemist Pi Sheng had developed movable type by 868 AD. Although Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz did not develop Europe's first movable type printing press until 1454, taking advantage of technological advances in oil based inks and heavy presses for crushing fruit in Europe, the first printing presses in Burma came from the West. Through interaction with British envoys and local Europeans, the Burmese court, from the time of Bò-daw-hpayà, exhibited a growing awareness of the importance of the printing press and had made numerous attempts during this time to acquire printing technology. In 1815, for example, Bò-daw-hpayà handed Felix Carey a list of things he wanted Carey to bring back from India, including fonts in English, Burmese, and Thai, as well as two printing presses.³

2. Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 244.

3. Dyson and Ubbie, *Great Inventions*, 131; Pearn, "Felix Carey," 68.

Initially, the foremost Baptist press in Southeast Asia was actually located in British Bengal. It was not until 1816 that Baptist missionaries in Serampore sent a press to their fellow missionaries in Yangon thus permitting the latter to turn one of the rooms of their mission house into a small printing office.⁴ The small press was apparently destroyed in the carnage that befell Yangon during the First Anglo-Burmese War and fighting among the Burmese after the British withdrew. Afterward, George H. Hough kept a small press in Yangon that was so well hidden that it was "very little known" and "those who frequented his house . . . never suspected the fact."⁵ Thus, Hough's press, invisible to the population around it, had very little chance of making an impact on the Burmese imagination.

At the beginning of the 1830s, Baptist missionaries in Burma renewed their efforts to establish local printing. At first, they depended upon founders in Calcutta to set up a press, but soon relied more upon shipments from the United States. The missionary presses in Burma kept reasonable pace with the advance of printing technology in the United States due to technology transfer from Boston, personally administered by missionaries on their way to Burma. Otis T. Cutter delivered a steam press to Maulmain on 19 October 1831, Cephas Bennett brought with him sufficient types for three hand presses in March 1832, and Royal B. Hancock delivered two more printing presses and a standing press, as well as a "large fount of English types," on 1 January 1833.⁶

With the exception of the more circumspect activities of the Catholic Church's printing presses, which possessed indigenous type from the eighteenth century in Italy, the real pioneers of Burmese vernacular printing in Burma were Western missionaries. When the missionaries at Serampore sent a press to Yangon in 1816, they also sent Burman types.⁷ This allowed the publication of translations of English language religious texts into Burmese, which would make them immediately accessible to readers, as opposed to the more challenging task of teaching everyone English first. Later, in January 1833, Hancock's delivery of the materials necessary for a type and stereotype foundry to Maulmain via Calcutta made it possible to speed up the production of indigenous script type for the use of local missionary printing presses. These technological advances together repre-

4. Judson, *Life of Adoniram Judson*, 106.

5. Otis T. Cutter, "Letter from Otis T. Cutter to L. Bolles, Dated 14 November 1833," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.9 (September 1834): 358.

6. Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, "Report of the Board for the Year Ending April 24, 1833," 216-17.

7. Judson, *Life of Adoniram Judson*, 106.

sented an important step toward spreading the Gospel to the myriad non-Burman ethnic minorities in the Burma. Although the Burman language was the *lingua franca* among the Burmese, many of those who could speak it were unable to read it. As Thomas Simons explained of Karen villagers along the Irrawaddy River to whom he gave religious tracts: "none could read the Burman books. As they could talk the Burman language, I left the Catechism with them, and told them to get some Burmans to read it to them."⁸ This could only work as a temporary solution; some of the Christian books had to be published in non-Burman languages, such as Mon and Karen.⁹ Missionaries had initially hoped that the Burman script could be used for Karen words, because Karen was a spoken and not a written language, but it was soon realized that "many Karen sounds could be expressed by the Tal[a]ing [Mon] character, which could not [be expressed] by the Burman [script]."¹⁰ To remove obstacles to printing religious literature for the Karens, Jonathan Wade devised a new script integrating Burman characters with Mon characters where necessary. Wade, who then produced a spelling book so that the Karens could understand the new system of writing, explained that out of the fifteen hundred radical or syllabic combinations he rendered into script, he only found it necessary to create two new types to supplement his Mon-Burman characters.¹¹

The interest that the court took in printing presses in the 1810s was renewed in March 1833, when Kincaid, a Baptist missionary at the royal capital, explained to the court how a printing press worked. As Kincaid observed, "when they understood our method of multiplying books by the use of machinery, they were quite astonished."¹² Ba-gyi-daw soon attempted to obtain a printing press for himself. According to Kincaid, however, it was not the king, but Makkara who played the major role in

8. Thomas Simons, "Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Simons at Rangoon," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.11 (November 1836): 265; Hancock's type and stereotype foundry was in operation in 1834 at the latest. Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, "A Tabular View of the Missions of the American Baptist Board, for January 1, 1835," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 15.1 (January 1835): 32.

9. Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, "Report of the Board for the Year Ending April 24, 1833," 217; Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, "Efficiency of the Press in Burmah," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 19.3 (March 1839): 63.

10. Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, "Report of the Board for the Year Ending April 24, 1833," 217.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *American Baptist Missionary Press* 13.11 (November 1833): 436.

encouraging interest in the printing press and related matters. As a result of Makkara's efforts, court officials were "anxious to have a printing establishment here."¹³ Indeed, in the second week of October 1833, both Makkara and his wife urged Kincaid to bring a printer and set up a printing press in the royal capital.¹⁴

Otis T. Cutter's arrival in Yangon on 27 September 1833 with a new press for the Burma mission soon attracted Burmese attention. Cutter's intention had been to take the press to Ava, along with type, paper, and a set of stereotype plates, as soon as possible.¹⁵ However, he was delayed for four months for a variety of reasons. It took considerable time, for example, to find a riverboat capable of carrying the large printing apparatus and the missionary's baggage up the Irrawaddy for a reasonable price. Another concern was the prevalence of river pirates. These concerns were heightened by frequent warnings by the aforementioned Khaing and his officers that the missionary would be robbed and indeed, that "there was scarcely a chance for [his] escaping."¹⁶ One wonders whether Khaing had other motives for delaying the missionary, such as creating an opportunity to see the printing press in operation, for Khaing had shown interest in obtaining a press a year earlier during a visit by Bennett and Wade. As Wade records:

He took particular notice of the art of printing, and asked how much a press and fount of types would cost? I told him both would cost about 2000 rupees. He said he wished very much to obtain one; and said if I would order one, he would pay for it.¹⁷

Since Cutter's onward journey was suspended, Khaing convinced the missionary to set up his printing equipment in Yangon and show him how

13. Eugenio Kincaid, "Letter from Eugenio Kincaid to Adoniram Judson, dated Ava, 24 July 1833," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.9 (September 1834): 357. The reference to the role of this "prince" in the dictionary project helps to identify him as Makkara.

14. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *American Baptist Missionary Press* 14.7 (July 1834): 283.

15. Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, "Missions in Asia," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 15.6 (June 1835): 242; Otis T. Cutter, "Letter from Otis T. Cutter to L. Bolles, dated Maulmain 6 September 1833," in *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.9 (September 1834): 358.

16. Cutter, "Letter from Otis T. Cutter to L. Bolles, Dated 14 November 1833," 358.

17. Jonathan Wade, "Journal of Rev. Mr. Wade," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 13.2 (February, 1833): 78.

it worked. Although Cutter first tried to print part of the Bible (the fifth chapter of Matthew), Khaing sent him a Burmese work, "a small national song," to be published instead. After the press was put into operation, Cutter was visited several times by curious government officials, Khaing even bringing one of his wives to see it because of the aesthetics of the mechanical operations:

[They] called to see the press and printing,—an art of which they had never formed any idea before. They expressed themselves much surprised and gratified, at seeing so wonderful a machine in operation.¹⁸

Cutter's arrival at Ava on 2 January 1834 caused even more excitement than in Yangon, as the news of the appearance of a printer and printing press spread quickly throughout the whole city.¹⁹ The press, however, was not set up immediately, contributing to the build-up of excitement among some members of the court. Kincaid's problems with the court ministers regarding the distribution of religious tracts delayed their consideration of granting permission for the operation of the press until February 1834. The ministers had no objections to the missionaries running a press and printing the New Testament, as it was one of the sacred books of Christianity, but would not allow the printing of tracts, such as *The Investigator*, that attacked Buddhism. Permission remained withheld until the missionaries agreed not to distribute any Christian tracts. Four months later, on 1 May 1834, Makkara finally found that he could not contain his curiosity any longer and privately asked Kincaid if he could view the operation of the press. Makkara also told the missionary that he would set up a special court in a part of the royal palace where Cutter could set up his machine. The eager prince, however, was unprepared for the size and weight of the apparatus and when he was informed of its physical dimensions, he abandoned the plan. Instead, he requested that Cutter send him a sample of the print type that would be used for the press.²⁰

18. Cutter, "Letter from Otis T. Cutter to L. Bolles, Dated 14 November 1833," 358; Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, "Missions in Asia," 242.

19. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *American Baptist Missionary Press* 15.2 (February 1835): 74. Ava was one of several large towns, all former royal capitals, in close proximity to the then royal city at Amarapura.

20. Eugenio Kincaid, "Letter from Reverend Mr. Kincaid to Dr. L. Bolles, dated Ava, 16 February 1834," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 15.2 (February 1835): 78; Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *American Baptist Missionary Press* 15.5 (May 1835): 200.

Reactions to Christian Literature

Christian missionizing among the general population worried the Burmese court because Burmese ruling elites relied on religion to bind the population of the kingdom together and tie it to the court. While Muslims and Catholics (after the early seventeenth century) did not engage in significant proselytization in Burma, American Baptist missionaries were committed to seeing a successful end to the extension of Christianity to Burma. An important part of nineteenth-century Baptist missionizing in Burma was the connection between Christian conversion and the advance of Western knowledge, for the missionaries viewed general learning as inseparable from religion. In their eyes, Burmese society was backward, its histories filled with myths, its technology primitive, and all of this was interwoven with the Burmese faith in Buddhism. Although the emergence of the distinction between secular and religious learning among Burmese is sometimes attributed to efforts by colonial authorities in the late nineteenth century, some Burmese made it clear in the 1830s that they indeed could distinguish between a range of Western knowledge, especially Western technology, on the one hand, and Christianity, on the other. Although some Burmese elites were very open to discussions regarding religion and learning more about Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, many in the court were less willing to do so. While some, such as Baw (chap. 7), were willing to discuss European science with Christian missionaries, they frequently refused to debate their religion. Missionaries were uncertain whether this was due to disinterest or because it was disapproved of by the court. As Kincaid noted of the refusal of one royal secretary to discuss religion with him, "whenever I brought up the subject of religion, he remained silent. Whether he felt entirely indifferent, or was afraid his followers, or someone among them, would report evil against him, I cannot say."²¹

Missionaries had trouble when they distributed Christian tracts outside of areas under British rule. While printed in British-held territory, Christian texts were distributed throughout independent Burma, at Yangon and Ava, as well as at British-held towns, such as Akyab, Maulmain, and Tavoy. Burmese who obtained Christian books in such towns then carried them onward to outlying villages, so that distribution expanded rapidly throughout much of Burma. Much of the most vocal opposition in Ba-gyi-

21. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.7 (July 1834): 279.

daw's court came from a clique centered on Prince Thayawaddy, who disliked Christian tracts because they were "considered offensive to religious" Buddhists.²² The animosity of this clique, however, reflected deeper opposition in Burmese society, among Burmese generally, but particularly among the Buddhist monks. As the missionary Nathan Brown complained on 21 November 1833, in a letter urging missionaries to learn Burmese to better combat their monastic opponents:

A few tracts scattered here and there, will awaken attention; but their testimony on the conscience of an individual is soon drowned by the overwhelming voice of priests and neighbors. Even a hint that the white foreigners are devising some mischief, is generally sufficient. But let the priest exclaim, that the book is 'derogatory to the honor of Gaudama,' and the people look upon it as a book of blasphemy.²³

Throughout the mid-1830s, Buddhist monks continued to attempt to intervene when Kincaid spoke in public, handed out pamphlets, and otherwise attempted to win converts. Their complaints were mainly that Kincaid was both a heretic and an agent of the British.²⁴

A few missionaries were very candid when they conveyed descriptions to fellow Baptists in New England of local opposition to their missionizing. Wade, for example, reported that many Burmese claimed that there were similarities in the teachings of Christianity and Buddhism and, with the notion that the two had sprung from the same source, argued that the branch of the Religion carried to the West, "where there are no priests, images, or pagodas," had "become amazingly corrupt." In other words, like the factional splits among Theravada Buddhist monks, one sect of "the Religion," what had become known as Christianity, had become heretical and impure and the other, that of Buddhism, had been "preserved . . . in its original purity."²⁵

22. Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, "Efficiency of the Press in Burmah," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 19.3 (March 1839): 63; Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.7 (July 1834): 277; Hall, *Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence*, 5 December 1855, 398, Phayre's memorial.

23. Nathan Brown, "Letter from Nathan Brown to Dr. L. Bolles, dated Maulmain 21 November 1833," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.10 (October 1834): 404.

24. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.7 (July 1834): 280; Thomas Simons, "Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Simons at Rangoon," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.12 (December 1836): 282.

25. Jonathan Wade, "Rev. Wade's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 13.5 (May 1833): 105.

Viewed in the context of factional disputes in the eighteenth century, and the show trials of Shin Atula held in the 1780s, opposition to Baptist proselytization took the same form as earlier attempts to grapple with factionalism and heresy. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this struggle had led Lower Chindwin monks and lay literati to stress their own superior textual authority and to engage in a series of efforts that were intended in one way or another to exert control over the composition and distribution of texts. One of the most intriguing measures was Nyanabhivamsa's composition of the *Treatise on the Religion* in 1831. As discussed in earlier chapters, Nyanabhivamsa's history presents, through its focus on Lower Chindwin monks of his and related lineages, a Burma in which a strong association is made between a "good" royal court and the Buddhist orthodoxy established in the Sudhamma Reformation. One wonders whether Nyanabhivamsa wrote this history, or was asked to write it, partly as a response to Christian missionary activities. As Nyanabhivamsa explains in the *Treatise on the Religion*:

I will [here] extract and write the history of the line of religious teachers because the myó-zà of Hsaw, the Atwin-wun Min-gyi Thiri-mahanda-thin-gyan, came to me personally many times with the [following] concerns. [As he informed me] unlike the history of the lineage of kings, there exists no single book or treatise on the history of the lineage of religious teachers . . . many significant things have not been committed to writing. [Forgetting these things] the line of teachers has [now] been broken. The people have heretical beliefs, obstructing the Religion. Please write so that all the people do not harbor heretical beliefs.²⁶

It is possible that the "people [with] heretical beliefs" referred to here, who are "obstructing the Religion," are Baptist missionaries and Burmese converts to Christianity and the *Treatise on the Religion*, partly a response to the spread of Christian tracts. Nyanabhivamsa's failure to specify those whom he refers to prevents any certain attribution, but the timing does suggest that there is a good chance that Christian missionizing framed the context for the production of this text. If this were the case, it would again indicate that the monks of Nyanabhivamsa's textual community viewed the production of Buddhist histories as a valuable tool in fighting their opponents, Christian missionaries as well as Atin monks.

Additional factors made attempts by Buddhist monks and others to

control the distribution of Christian texts more difficult. First, the scale of the production of Christian texts was enormous. In the eighteenth century, a Burmese text would have to be copied by hand, one copy at a time, if it were to be circulated widely. The Baptists were engaging in a mass publication effort that produced many thousands of copies of texts in a very short time. From 1 April 1830 to 31 December 1832, two Baptist presses at Maulmain published 250,000 Christian tracts, amounting to well over four million pages, and three thousand copies of the New Testament. The number of presses and the scale of the printing increased dramatically over the next five years. In 1836 and 1837, for example, seven iron hand-presses at Maulmain and a smaller press at Tavoy printed 670,500 religious works, amounting to some thirty-three million pages. This included almost nine million pages of the Bible, one million pages of the *View*, fifty thousand pages of catechism, and over twenty-seven million pages of scripture extracts and other tracts, with school books and other publications making up the balance at almost two million pages. By the 1840s at Maulmain, established as a mission station by George Dana Boardman in 1827, Baptist missionaries were publishing copies of the New Testament in Mon as well.²⁷ Without their own printing presses, monastic leaders and other Burmese who opposed Christianity thus lacked the means to compete with the missionaries in the volume of religious texts being distributed.

The second factor was that the Lower Chindwin monks who had asserted their authority over the Religion in the Burmese court in the late eighteenth century had in this way gained the backing of the throne in their efforts to oppose the Atin leader, Shin Atula. In control of the Sudhamma Reformation, they could prevent rival monasteries from receiving

27. Cephas Bennett, "Letter from Mr. [Cephas] Bennett to Dr. L. Bolles, dated Rangoon, 30 May 1833," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.4 (April 1834): 163; Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, "Efficiency of the Press in Burmah," 63; Judson, *Life of Adoniram Judson*, 498. The mission printing office by then had become a massive affair: "... the printing office is of brick, two stories high, 136 feet long by 56 wide ... It contains four hand-presses, and a power-press, equal to two more; twelve small fonts of English type, one of Burman, one of Karen, and one of Talaing. For these last, there are punches and matrices complete, so that they may be cast anew at any time ... there being about one thousand matrices for the Burman font alone. A new set of punches and matrices has just been ordered for the Burman character on a size reduced one third. The upper rooms of the office are devoted to a bindery, storage, &c. The capabilities of the bindery are fully equal to the work of the printing office. Every part of the labor, in printing and binding, is performed by natives; of whom, on an average, 25 are constantly employed." Malcom, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia*, 1.68.

royal or other patronage, remove factional leaders from these monasteries, and even put them on trial and have them defrocked. After Burma's defeat in the First Anglo-Burmese War, Sudhamma monks could still hope to do so to Buddhist monastic opponents, but missionaries, whose mistreatment might invite another British invasion, seemed to be immune from state intervention. Burmese ministers still made vain attempts to halt the distribution of Christian tracts, but they had to resort to negotiation with British authorities rather than involve the Burmese throne. In one case, they approached Burney, the British Resident at the royal court, requesting that he prevent the ubiquitous Adoniram Judson from distributing Christian tracts and criticizing Buddhism. Burney refused the request, claiming that he could do nothing to stop Judson from engaging in these acts, because Judson was "in no way connected with the British government." Changing tact, they asked Burney if he could at least convince Judson to limit his distribution to Yangon. Burney agreed and wrote to Judson with a request to this effect, but other American missionaries, such as Kincaid, continued unabated.²⁸

The only case in the 1830s in which Burmese authorities officially attempted to punish missionaries for distributing texts failed dismally, a sign that the court was no longer as confident of its ability to control texts in the kingdom as had been the case under Bò-daw-hpayà. In late 1833, the chief ministers, the members of the Council of Ministers, issued new orders in the name of the king to the effect that Kincaid was to stop both preaching and distributing Christian tracts. According to an interior minister of the king's Privy Council, however, Ba-gyì-daw had not given the order. This was an entirely plausible claim, given the fact that Ba-gyì-daw, in a weakened state of mind after the Burmese defeat in 1826, had lost control of most state matters to a brother of one of his queens, who appropriated royal authority and controlled the Council of Ministers. Alternatively, it might have been the case that the king relied on the Council to deliver a harsh warning, while simultaneously attempting to avoid alienating Westerners and thus provoke another war.²⁹ According to Kincaid, the ministers were mainly upset with his distribution of two books, *The Golden Balance* and *The Investigator*, which, in Kincaid's own words were "books

28. Adoniram Judson, "Mr. Judson's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 11.5 (May 1831): 153.

29. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.7 (July 1834): 281; idem, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 15.2 (February 1835): 73.

[that] show that Gaudama was no god, and that the Bedagat, is a fable."³⁰ Kincaid promised to stop distributing these particular books in early 1834, but recommenced doing so after several months, leading to his arraignment before the Council of Ministers on 6 November 1834.³¹ In the end, the ministers released Kincaid with a warning, although they again advised that he leave the royal city. Those Burmese in the court who had opposed Kincaid were frustrated by the court's impotence or unwillingness to suppress the distribution of Christian texts in a more direct and effective manner and some evidently harbored a special grudge against the missionary. Later, during the 1837 "revolution" that brought Thayawaddy to the throne, Thayawaddy's men used the opportunity of the reigning confusion to attack Kincaid outside the capital and beat him so badly that erroneous reports went out concerning his death.³²

In reality, the court's fears about the potential dangers of Christian influence among the general population through Christian tracts may have been exaggerated. Most missionary accounts of the period indeed include eager observations that large numbers of Burmese sought to acquire the books and pamphlets being printed by the Baptist presses. Certainly, there was a small population of converts, especially among non-Burman ethnic minorities. For these converts, Christian tracts clearly had a strong appeal. It is unclear, however, if most of the Burmese who took the Christian tracts did so because of the latter's content or simply to have them as conspicuous objects. There is evidence that some Burmese who clearly had no interest in Christian teachings at all, nonetheless visited missionaries to acquire the "books" (Christian tracts) the missionaries offered freely.³³ Some Burmese, for example, made special requests for large books, as opposed to small ones.³⁴ As one ten-year-old Buddhist

30. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.7 (July 1834): 279; idem, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 15.5 (May 1835): 198.

31. As one chief minister read the charges: "The American teacher is stirring up divisions among the people, teaching them to despise the religion of their country, and to follow a religion which the king, the princes, and noblemen do not approve. He is not contented to live in the Golden City quietly, as other foreigners do, but in the city and all places round, is giving books and preaching a foreign religion, and his object is to bring into contempt and destroy the religion which has been revered for ages." Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 15.9 (September 1835): 365.

32. Bayfield, "Narrative," 231–32.

33. Judson, *Life of Adoniram Judson*, 110–11.

34. Thomas Simons, "Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Simons, at Rangoon," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 19.2 (February 1839): 30; idem, "Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Simons, at Rangoon," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 19.2 (February 1839): 30.

novice demanded, when refusing a copy of a catechism offered by Kincaid, "I want a large book."³⁵ The growth of literacy and the importance granted texts by respected members of their society seems to have given books a value in their own right as a kind of early nineteenth century version of "collectors' items." As Yule observed in the mid-nineteenth century: "The Burmese pay great reverence to their books, shikho-ing or making a salam to them, and look with great horror at our irreverent treatment of books. To sit on a box of books they would consider absolute profanation."³⁶ Practicality was another motive. One Burman, who had not converted to Christianity, bought an English version of the Bible in addition to the Burmese translation he already had in order to read them together, apparently doing so to improve his command of written English as much as to better understand Christianity.³⁷ Not everyone in Burmese society shared the same respect for books. The missionary Thomas Simons, for example, was surprised to learn that in Yangon at least some of those who accepted Christian tracts "tore the books up to make cigars and smoke opium."³⁸ Further, the missionaries had also misinterpreted widespread curiosity in the "new" religion as interest in conversion.³⁹

Strong anti-Christian sentiments gradually subsided in Burma when it became clear that mass conversions to Christianity among the general Buddhist population were not impending and that most of the conversions took place among non-Buddhist ethnic minorities on the British side of the border. Under Mindon, European visitors, as always, presented to the king Christian texts, including Burmese translations of the Bible, as gifts. Similarly, we find that other literati kept copies of the Bible as well. Mindon took a bolder step when he granted Marks permission to place Burmese translations of the Bible in sixty of the capital's most important

35. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.7 (July 1834): 278.

36. Yule, *Narrative*, 182.

37. Thomas Simons, "Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Simons," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 19.10 (October 1839): 234.

38. Thomas Simons, "Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Simons," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.11 (November 1836): 264–65.

39. As Kincaid lamented in 1835, "Many who read [the Christian tracts], appear only to receive a transient impression. They sit down to the work rather as curious than as earnest inquirers, and imagine that they are examining what is suited to the views and wants of a distant nation, and not truths embracing the best interest of mankind. The result is this; a good impression is left in favour of this new religion, but it is only an impression, and like the morning cloud soon passes away." Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.1 (September 1836): 110.

monasteries. High-ranking ministers also accepted Burmese translations of the Bible and, considering them safe, gave permission to distribute copies to others. Buddhist monks also seem to have become more relaxed when it came to Christian tracts, perhaps more confident that Christian tracts would do little to harm the Buddhist system of belief and they could now consider Christian tracts more as an intellectual challenge than as a threat. Indeed, as early as 1835, Kincaid, who had attracted so much negative attention for his distribution of anti-Buddhist tracts the year before, visited the chief of religious affairs, gave him extracts from the New Testament and several Christian tracts, and engaged in a lengthy discussion of Christianity. The chief of religious affairs even promised to read carefully the Christian literature Kincaid had presented.⁴⁰ Years later, Marks also distributed numerous Christian tracts and books to monks without notable incident.⁴¹

The Burmese experience with the Baptist printing presses had a powerful and durable impact on the perceptions of the court, not of religion, but of its own weaknesses in the context of a new information regime that crossed over political boundaries. Mass publications, especially when produced by presses outside of the court's reach, could not be controlled easily, removing from the court authority over *all* texts. Monastic and lay literati in the royal city, with the backing of the throne, could still identify, censor, restrict, or encourage certain texts, but Christian and other Western texts would circulate independently of their influence. Soon, new texts, written by Burmese living in British Tenasserim and Arakan, published by the same Baptist presses, would follow and would present to Burmese readers in the kingdom life in a Burmese society not ruled by the Kòn-baung court. In this atmosphere, as the demise of the court's absolute textual authority became widely perceived, religious movements and monastic sects saw opportunities to challenge the religious orthodoxy promoted by the court. The court's eventual reaction would be to appropriate the Western technology being used against it. One more development encouraged this dramatic step, the introduction of the newspaper.

40. Eugenio Kincaid, "Kincaid's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.8 (August 1836): 187.

41. Hall, *Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence*, 17 April 1855, 322, Spears to Phayre; Burney, *Journal*, 60; Marks, *Forty Years in Burma*, 273–74, 283.

Newspapers

The missionary monopoly on mass publications and hegemony over the transfer of information from the West to Burma began to break in the mid-1830s with the arrival of another new form of media, English-language newspapers. The earliest such papers in Bengal and Burma sought to give scattered European merchants, seamen, government officials, and others a miscellany of information. Some of this information was relevant to life in the eastern Indian Ocean, such as weather reports, shipping news, and current commodity prices. However, these early newspapers also included news from home and elsewhere in the world, usually in the form of extracts culled from other newspapers in Europe. This information included a range of topics, from religious cults in Tsarist Russia, to political and social events in London, and even detailed accounts of warfare in the Balkans or wherever else trouble broke out. The earliest European newspapers in Burma actually came from Bengal, European residents importing Calcutta-based newspapers such as the *Englishman*, *Harkaru*, and the *Statesman*. Soon, local newspapers also appeared in various towns of Lower Burma, at first in Maulmain, but later primarily in Yangon. The oldest was H. W. Lewis' *Maulmain Chronicle*, a weekly, followed by the *Maulmain Advertiser* in 1846, the *Moulmein Times*, and the *Friend of Burma*. The *Akyab Commercial News* (later the *Arakan News*) appeared in Western Burma in 1853 and the British occupation of Yangon allowed Lewis to open the first English newspaper in Yangon, the four-page biweekly *Rangoon Chronicle* in the same year. The *Rangoon Chronicle* was a case study in the financial difficulties of newspapers focused on a small English-speaking community, passing from owner to owner, changing its title to the *Pegu Gazette* and then to the *Rangoon Times* in June 1858. The *Rangoon Gazette* opened as a competitor in 1861.⁴²

Such newspapers also captured the Burmese imagination among the population of the royal city. No indigenous equivalent existed in Burma before the last half of the nineteenth century. While the Burmese court typically had to wait days or weeks for reports about events outside of the royal capital, newspapers granted immediacy to the flow of information

42. "Some Account of Moulmein," *Colonial Magazine and East India Review* 3 (Sept. to Dec., 1844): 195–98; "Early Newspapers in Burma," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 27.3 (1937): 277–81.

regarding important world events, shortening both time and space. In the 1820s and 1830s, Lane (mentioned earlier) and the French-educated Spaniard Don Gonzales de Lanciego both received the Bengal newspapers and brought them to the royal court. At the request of the king and the ministers, the two men translated "every paragraph which contains anything likely to be of interest to [the court]."⁴³ This observation does not inform us as to what were the criteria for the selection of articles for translation, but certainly, Lanciego was more obliged to the Burmese court than to European powers. As a kind of early nineteenth-century "free agent," who rose to the position of collector of Yangon, this man owed his wealth and status to the court and had even married into the royal family, through a sister to one of the queens.⁴⁴ It was in his interests, in other words, to cater to the hopes of the court and this frequently meant giving undue weight to some reports and underestimating the importance of others. As Burney found, his own and Lane's translations from the Bengal newspapers had given both the king and the ministers the idea that Tenasserim had become too costly for the British to retain and that they eagerly awaited "an opportunity of restoring them."⁴⁵ Information about this particular development circulated beyond royal circles. According to one interior minister "all at Ava, had heard [about] and seen [it] in the newspapers."⁴⁶

At first, the Burmese were understandably more interested in developments within areas of Burma now under British rule. However, as Burmese became more aware of the broad scope of information about the world made available by imported newspapers, the scope of their interests in reading newspapers expanded. Military men, for example, saw such major conflicts as the Crimean War as an opportunity to learn more about the methods and means of European-style warfare. The Burmese court became aware of some of the details of the war through Calcutta and Yangon newspaper articles translated for them. Û Sho, a former military officer and Mindon's "Min-laung" chief minister, pressed visiting Europeans for any details they could provide on the Crimean War, especially the geography involved, as well as the sizes and strengths of the opposing European forces. A court writer took down notes and while the minister

and Yule ate breakfast, the clerk recorded the Europeans' answers in his *parabaik* notebook.⁴⁷ Another chief minister, the Pa-be *wun*, also known as the "Mya-doung" chief minister, who had served Mindon as Master of Ordnance, pressed further. Known for his "genius where metal is concerned," he was responsible not only for the state of the royal muskets and cannon, but he also handled the casting of bells and the production of parasols for royal use. Mindon also turned to the Pa-be *wun* to seek out Europeans who could instruct the court on the use of a daguerreotype apparatus, one of the many curious items given to the king as presents. Although Europeans believed that the Pa-be *wun* bore a special hatred of the English, resulting from Burma's defeat in the first two Anglo-Burmese wars, he was friendly in his interactions with visiting British representatives. Not surprisingly, his numerous questions concerning the Crimean War were devoted to the range and caliber of the artillery used in the conflict.⁴⁸

Information gleaned from newspapers had a broader impact on the geopolitical perspectives of the court. Before Mindon's reign, the political world seen through Burmese eyes appeared to be dominated by two great rulers, the Chinese emperor and the Burmese king. After Burma's victories over Chinese forces in the early Kòn-baung period and two Anglo-Burmese Wars, Britain took China's place as the co-equal kingdom of the world. In Thayawaddy's reign, the Kòn-baung ruler was the king of the East and the rulers of the Shan states and Siam were his *saw-bwàs*, just as the King of Britain was the ruler of the West and "the rulers of France, Prussia, Italy, and other European states were his" *saw-bwàs*. As the world became larger and the political terrain more complex, Britain seemed less hegemonic and there now appeared to be possibilities for a reversal of British fortunes that did not depend upon Burmese victory alone. Some believed that since the war in Russia tied up the British, they would eventually have to abandon Pegu and send their troops to India to defend it against the Russians and Persians.⁴⁹ The Burmese also eyed European

47. Hall, *Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence*, 18 April 1854, 180, Spears to Phayre; Hall, *Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence*, 30 April 1854, 181, Spears to Phayre; Yule, *Narrative*, 101, 245.

48. Yule, *Narrative*, 89, 128, 245; Phayre, "Private Journal," 81; Hall, *Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence*, 2 September 1855, 373, Phayre to Dalhousie.

49. J. Talboys Wheeler, *Journal of a Voyage Up the Irrawaddy to Mandalay and Bhamo* (Rangoon: J. W. Baynes, 1871): 51; Hall, *Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence*, 30 April 1854, 181, Spears to Phayre.

43. Burney, *Journal*, 19.

44. Ibid., 51-2; Pemberton, "Journal from Munipoor to Ava," 46; Crawford, *Journal*, 94.

45. Burney, *Journal*, 19.

46. Ibid., *Journal*, 79.

encroachments in Abyssinia (Ethiopia) carefully through the news. Mindon saw in Abyssinia analogies to his own situation and pointed out the foolishness of the Abyssinian king to have provoked a war that he had no hope to win. Information on events in Abyssinia moved beyond the court and out to the general population and "formed the great staple of conversation, both in the palace and in the town . . ." ⁵⁰

Mindon and other members of the court were not slow in understanding the importance of the news media in influencing international politics. What the newspapers reported, for example, could encourage renewed hostilities with the British and could determine whether other European powers would interfere should British troops be on the move again. Not only was there a growing awareness of "world opinion," but also a realization for the first time that it was relevant to Burma's survival. Vigilance in maintaining the court's and the kingdom's good international reputation thus became the order of the day. Negative news reports became a serious cause for concern. On one occasion, for example:

[Mindon] kept counting his beads quickly while alluding to the press, and continued the subject by saying that he was doing all he could to show his friendship to the English, and his actions were continually being misrepresented in the newspapers. ⁵¹

As Bò-daw-hpayà and the Lower Chindwin monks had done in the 1780s and Ba-gyi-daw's ministers had attempted and failed to do in the 1830s, Mindon now resolved to exert the throne's control over the flow of information. The major obstacle to controlling the news media was that

50. Robert Gordon, "Revised Copy of Diary of Mr. Robert Gordon, Civil Engineer, on Special Duty on an Expedition from Burmah to Talifoo," in *British Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 41, *Western China* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1971), 81.

51. Gordon, "Revised Copy of Diary," 81; Some British authorities found Mindon's predicament, or at least the circumstances causing it, humorous. As the Marquess of Dalhousie observed in a private letter: "In Pegu there is, as far as Burmah is concerned, equal quiet . . . There is perfect quiescence [on the part of Mandalay], and the King is actually withdrawing from the frontier his whole troops. Nay, the entente cordiale is becoming almost ludicrous. For at this very time at which the Press is telling everybody that the Burmese are coming down with 80,000 men to invade us, I am actually making a contract with the King himself [through the services of Thomas Spears] to sell us all the wheat in Burmah—he monopolizes the whole—for our commissariat in the province which we have just conquered from him! . . . is it not a conical fact!" J. G. A. Baird, ed., "Private letter, Government House, 30 March 1854," in *Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1910), 293–94; see also Hall, ed., *The Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence*, xlv.

Burma lacked the printing technology that would allow it to compete on both sides of the Anglo-Burmese border with European newspapers and other printed works. Mindon turned to H. Ahee, the Sino-Burmese editor and publisher of the Burma Herald Press, set up in Lower Burma in 1868. This press, as Mindon was aware, had begun to identify and publish important vernacular works for the general Burmese public. Mindon was able to convince him to come to the royal capital and begin a new, royally influenced newspaper, which would compete with English newspapers in British Rangoon. ⁵²

The plans laid out for the newspaper included the suggestion that it be given the long title of *Mandalè-yadana-poun-shwe-myó-daw-gyi-ka-yaik-tout-thí-thadin-sa*, but that the title page would also be given the shorter English title of *Mandalay Gazette*. ⁵³ It was considered that the newspaper might be printed in Yangon, but Mandalay was finally settled upon. The throne took the initiative in laying out the newspaper's numerous goals. Among the most significant were that the newspaper would serve as a means by which to influence the intercourse of information going out from Burma and coming from Europe, as well as India, Siam, and China, all countries within Burma's immediate interests. The newspaper would allow Mindon to counter negative things said about the kingdom in foreign circles and publications and highlight the more positive aspects of his reign. The newspaper would provide information on trade goods and encourage merchants to come and trade in the kingdom. "Works of knowledge" from other countries were to be included as well. Finally, using the printing press, plans were laid for publishing numerous copies of the corrected version of the Buddhist canonical texts. ⁵⁴ As we shall see, information on the travels of Burmese officials to Europe in the early 1870s was included as well. All of this assumed, however, that Europeans and their governments were willing to show the same interest in what the Burmese had to say as vice versa. These hopes would be far from realized.

Although missionaries failed to convert the Burmese population to Christianity, they had succeeded in changing the presentation of Burmese texts forever. The arrival of Baptist printing presses marked the beginning of Burma's print revolution, although many did not recognize this until nearly the end of the nineteenth century when almost anything Burmese

52. Bagshawe, "Preface," viii.

53. Copies of this newspaper are very rare. I have only seen one copy, which was contained in the Mandalay cultural museum in 2001. Alicia Turner has recently informed me that she obtained copies of several in Sagaing in early 2005.

wrote for public distribution was committed to type. From the mid-nineteenth century, Mindon, and later Thibaw, took advantage of the new information technology for the benefit of the court. Before Mindon, however, the court had cause for concern.

From the beginning of Bò-daw-hpayà's reign, he and the Lower Chindwin clique that dominated his court had successfully established their authority over texts and learning in the kingdom. In the 1830s, this authority was severely tested by Western missionaries. Missionary proselytization probably did not represent a serious threat to Buddhism among the lowland Burmese and certainly there were many in Burmese society who openly challenged the missionaries. Court intervention on religious grounds would be expected, for the king, as a *dhammaraja*, was responsible for the well being of Buddhism. The transcripts of conversations with Western missionaries and the charges that the court leveled against Kincaid reveal that the main concern was with the distribution of large numbers of banned texts. For the court, this represented a circumvention of royal authority on a grand scale, something unfathomable in Bò-daw-hpayà's time.

The condition of royal authority, however, had changed. Ba-gyi-daw and his ministers necessarily took softer steps than those of his grandfather because of the complications resulting from the kingdom's defeat in the First Anglo-Burmese War. Fear of another war with the British prevented any direct action against the missionaries and their presses remained safely on the other side of the border, in British Tenasserim. When additional media, especially newspapers, became available, these too remained immune from royal control. Burma's territorial power had received a massive blow as a result of its defeat in 1826, but its authority among Burmese living within the kingdom had remained intact. The flow of Western learning, increasing and seemingly uncontrollable, however, demonstrated on a daily basis that royal authority over information was weakening and that the court no longer possessed the strength it once had. Mindon attempted to resolve this predicament in two ways. First, as we have seen, he created his own newspaper, one printed in Burmese, which would select what information about the West Burmese would read. Second, and more fundamentally, he and Nyanabhivamsa's pupil, the monk known as Shin Nyeyya, would also attempt to reemphasize the throne's authority over religious learning, the subject of the following chapter.

chapter nine

*Sangha and Dhammaraja*

While Western learning was beginning to have an impact on indigenous thinking, the extent of this influence was still limited. There were those among the literati who depended upon the 'old' learning as much as Makkara and others pursued Western learning and technology. The throne occupied an awkward position between both. On the one hand, it could not afford to ignore the utility of borrowed Western technology or afford to reject Western learning while it faced the possibility of a further conflict with Britain. On the other hand, its position in society was dependent on the old learning, that knowledge provided by Nyanabhivamsa and others. In other words, Western learning had not yet had an impact on ideas of rulership and would not until after the rise of Thibaw to the throne in 1878, as we shall see in chapter 11. Lacking an appropriate alternative model for kingship, when Mindon sought to strengthen the court's position in Burmese society, he had to do so on the basis of the formula of kingship established by the throne and Nyanabhivamsa in the late eighteenth century.

Burma's defeat in the Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852–1853), and thus its loss of the fruits of territorial expansion gained in Lower Burma in the 1750s, put the throne in a difficult position. Burmese kingship, like that of other Theravada Buddhist states, emulated ideal roles. The king was a *dhammaraja*, the king of the law and protector of the Religion, and he was a *cakravartin*, a universal ruler like the Buddhist emperor Asoka. Burmese kings frequently used their aspirations to *cakravartin*-ship as a means of legitimizing conquests, begun, it was usually claimed, to save the Religion wherever it was in decline.¹ In practice, the emulation of the *cakravartin* involved continuous expansion at the expense of Burma's neighbors, espe-

1. Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, 69–70.

cially during Bò-daw-hpayà's reign. Not only did this king bring under his rule Arakan, Manipur, and Assam, but he also spent years campaigning against Ayudhya.

Maintaining the king's image as a *cakravartin*, however, became very difficult from the mid-nineteenth century. Two defeats at British hands reversed Burmese expansion and the British presence in Lower Burma, Arakan, Assam, and Manipur promised to prevent any further attempts to bring these areas again under Kòn-baung rule. Certainly, during his early years, Mindon hoped that British troubles in India and in the Crimean War would lead to their withdrawal. He even ignored for a considerable time the British occupation of Lower Burma, which he refused to recognize by treaty. By the early 1860s, however, he had given up.

Since new opportunities to demonstrate the king's *cakravartin* status through conquest did not appear to be forthcoming, Mindon placed greater emphasis on his role as a *dharmmaraja*. The *dharmmaraja* through his meritorious rule maintains social order, the purity of the Religion, and thus the preservation of the "field of merit." This makes possible the accumulation of merit by society as a whole and all good Buddhists hoped eventually to escape the *samsara* cycle (the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth).² Monastic and lay literati reminded kings of their responsibilities to rule in this way and the consequences for the kingdom if they did not. When Nyanabhivamsa wrote the *Rajadhiraja Vilasini* to commemorate Bò-daw-hpayà's coronation, he used examples of the moral rulership of earlier kings to instruct his own king on the proper manner in which to direct the affairs of the kingdom. As Nyanabhivamsa explained:

An unrighteous king destroys his own kingdom and is silly . . . [so King Mahajeyapurapati] practiced unto perfection the ten kingly duties, which he honoured like his marble umbrella and which he compiled from such Jataka stories as the Mahavamsa . . . alms-giving, precept, self-sacrifice, equity, gentleness, religious austerity, absence of anger, harmlessness, patience, agreeableness . . . he forbade the people to do such unmeritorious acts as life-taking et caetera, and enjoined on them the observance of such meritorious acts as alms-giving, precept and so forth . . . he would not allow even a chicken to be killed . . . He strongly restrained the people from theft and such fraudulent acts as the use of false weights, false measures, false coins . . . Likewise he strongly

2. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, 41.

checked them from unlawful sexual intercourse . . . He made them zealous in such good acts as alms-giving . . . Thus he showed favour to the world . . . to a marvelous degree and in an unheard of manner. This is his patronage of the world.³

Encouragement of the king's role as a *dharmmaraja* was also forthcoming from mid-nineteenth century monastic and lay literati who did not like the ways in which Burma was changing. The Second Maungdaung *hsayadaw*, Shin Nyeyya, a Lower Chindwin monk from the same village as Nyanabhivamsa, pushed for religious reform at a time when anti-clericalism was gaining popular support, monastic discipline appeared to be on the wane, and a number of new, conservative, monastic sects emerged which shared Nyeyya's and Mindon's concerns, but had their own ideas about what constituted correct religious beliefs and practices.

Nyeyya and Ecclesiastical Reform

Some attention to Nyeyya's background is necessary in order to understand the chief of religious affairs' relationship with the king as well as the legacy left by Nyanabhivamsa and his textual community. When Thayawaddy took the throne in 1837 from Ba-gyi-daw, he tried to repair the damage left by years of corruption by reviving old standards of law and religion. He moved his capital from Ava to Amarapura, Bò-daw-hpayà's old city, and executed corrupt ministers and judges alike. He also brought Nyeyya into the palace where the young monk read out the letter declaring the change of rulership to the assembled court.⁴ Nyeyya was a disciple of the seventy-year-old Suriyavamsa (the Thè-in *hsayadaw*), who was now

3. Shin Nyanabhivamsa, "Rajadhiraja Vilasini or the Manifestation of the King of Kings," ed. and tr. Pe Maung Tin, *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 4.1 (1914): 21.

4. *Dutiya-maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 225; Oliver B. Pollak, *Empires in Collision: Anglo-Burmese Relations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), 18; Care has been taken to differentiate between Nyeyya and Paññasami. Both came from Maungdaung village and were contemporaries (not to mention their close personal relationship) and this has led some scholars to confuse the two men. For a careful delineation of the two personages see Sān Maung, *Maungdaung Wān-kyin Kyè-moun-pyin*, 140–41. Some scholars, like Stewart, have wrongly assumed that Nyeyya remained the chief of religious affairs throughout the Thayawaddy-Mindon reigns. Stewart, *Buddhism in Burma*, 6. See Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 78–79, for a discussion of this problem. Paññasami, *Sasanavamsa*, 147.

appointed chief of religious affairs. It was Nyeyya's relationship with Suriyavamsa that brought him to the highest ecclesiastical office. When Suriyavamsa died, Nyeyya took his place for the first of two tenures as chief of religious affairs. Not much information on his specific activities during this period has come to light. It is clear, however, that Nyeyya was closely identified with the throne. In 1846, when Pagan overthrew Thayawaddy, the new king also replaced Nyeyya with the Second Bagaya *hsayadaw* as the chief of religious affairs.⁵

This was not as drastic a change as it might appear. As Mendelson has observed, both of these chiefs of religious affairs were part of a monastic oligarchy characterized by intertwined monastic lines of teacher-pupil relationships.⁶ What Mendelson does not point out is that this oligarchy was drawn from the same Lower Chindwin monastic lineages. Therefore, no drastic change in tradition took place. Nyeyya and the Second Bagaya *hsayadaw* were pupils of Suriyavamsa, Suriyavamsa was a disciple of Dhammabinanda (the First Bagaya *hsayadaw*),⁷ and Dhammabinanda, like Nyanabhivamsa, was a student of Gunasiri of Kani (the Min-O *hsayadaw*). Thus, the replacement of Nyeyya by the Second Bagaya *hsayadaw* is best viewed as a turnover of individuals, rather than any attempt on the king's part to break with tradition, the rejection of the Sudhamma orthodoxy, or as a sign that the influence of Lower Chindwin men in monastic affairs had waned.

Whether or not the Second Bagaya *hsayadaw* and Nyeyya saw their shared textual community as important as late as the 1840s cannot be demonstrated with absolute certainty, but there are strong indications that Lower Chindwin connections continued to be important among the Sudhamma monks. Under the Second Bagaya *hsayadaw*, for example, the Maungdaung monks lost no authority when it came to knowledge of the Pali texts. The Second Bagaya *hsayadaw*, who indeed was reputed to be an excellent scholar, was appointed to bring monks back in line with the strict observation of the Vinaya. Despite his own expertise, this chief of religious affairs turned specifically to the Maungdaung monks (the chronicles pluralize this, demonstrating the general repute of monks from this village) for help in interpreting the orthodox Pali texts and treatises. Thus, after

5. *Dutiya-maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 357; Royal Order 15 November 1839, 8.726; Royal Order 2 December 1845, 8.767; Tin Hswei, *Ü. Tha-thana-wuntha Dipani*, 297, 304–5.

6. *Dutiya-maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 357, 359, 367.

7. Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 78–79; Tin Hswei, *Ü. Tha-thana-wuntha Dipani*, 303.

the Second Bagaya *hsayadaw* died in 1848, Nyeyya was simply returned to the position of chief of religious affairs.⁸ When Mindon usurped the throne in 1853, he chose not to appoint his own monastic teacher as chief of religious affairs, but instead kept Nyeyya in place.⁹

Nyeyya was born as Maung Tha Hmo in the Lower Chindwin. Although his grandfather had been a local headman, his father was a cultivator. Due to the famines of the early nineteenth century, his family moved around the Lower Chindwin, spending a brief period in Kani Township, where Nyeyya was born in 1801. After another famine, however, his family moved to Maungdaung where Nyeyya would grow up. He was a novice in several Lower Chindwin monasteries until 1821, when he was ordained as a monk. Afterward, he moved to a monastery in the royal capital (then in Ava). Nyeyya appears to fall into the same category of the self-righteous and ambitious literati as other Lower Chindwin men who pushed their way up to the top. Local accounts gathered in the colonial period relate that Nyeyya was headstrong as a youth and did not get on well with some of his monastic teachers. Reportedly, one even slapped him with his leather slipper.¹⁰ Paul Ambroise Bigandet's meeting with him in the early 1850s indicates that little had changed. As Bigandet explains:

[I] was not a little surprised to find a man exceedingly self-conceited, who thought that to him alone belonged the right of speaking. His language was that of a master to whom no one was expected to presume to offer the least contradiction. He appeared quite offended when his visitor was compelled to dissent from him on certain points brought forward during the conversation . . . His spiritual pride cast a darkish and unpleasant appearance on his person. He spoke quickly and sententiously; appearing all the while scarcely to notice his interlocutor. Admiration of self and vanity pierced through the thin veil which his affected humility spread over his countenance . . .¹¹

Like Nyanabhivamsa, Nyeyya maintained close connections to the Lower Chindwin area after he became the chief of religious affairs. His few

8. Tin Hswei, *Ü. Tha-thana-wuntha Dipani*, 304–5.

9. *Dutiya-maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 357, 359, 367.

10. Langham-Carter, "Four Notables of the Lower Chindwin," 339–41.

11. Paul Ambroise Bigandet, *The Life or Legend of Gaudama. The Buddha of the Burmese. With Annotations. The Ways to Neibban, and Notice on the Phongyies or Burmese Monks* (Delhi: Bharatiya Publishing House, 1879), 2.269–70.

petitions on behalf of monasteries outside of the royal capital were devoted to the interests of Lower Chindwin monks. An example of this is the establishment of animal sanctuaries in the Lower Chindwin. As Buddhism views the taking of life as a sin, Buddhist monks typically maintain ponds as sanctuaries for fish and turtles, although members of the Kòn-baung laity certainly did not adhere to this tenet very strictly. The most austere monks during the dynasty pushed for entire towns and villages to be declared sanctuaries for animals. When Thayawaddy came to the throne, either Nyeyya or his monastic elder successfully persuaded the king to declare four villages as sanctuaries: two villages in Pakàn-gyì and Taloub townships and two more in the Lower Chindwin, Ywa-tha in Kani township and Budalin (just south of Maungdaung village) in Alon township.¹² It was probably Nyeyya who helped these Lower Chindwin monks, for Nyeyya repeated such activities when he was returned to the position of chief of religious affairs after the Second Bagaya *hsayadaw* died. On 24 June 1854, for example, he successfully petitioned Mindon to establish another animal sanctuary in Maungdaung.¹³ He maintained his connections with his home region in other ways as well. Over the course of some twenty years (1846–1866) he had work gradually completed on a great pagoda in the Lower Chindwin, the Hpayà-gyì. Although Mindon provided land and money for its upkeep, Nyeyya himself bought a further fifty acres in the area to dedicate to the pagoda. Likewise, when local villagers fled to Maungdaung and elsewhere because of famine, he had them brought back and exempted them from taxes so long as they maintained the upkeep of the Hpayà-gyì. Moreover, probably through his own petition, the eighty-nine households of his relatives in Maungdaung were exempt from taxation during Mindon's reign.¹⁴

Nyeyya, Mindon, and Religious Reform

Nyeyya was a conservative force (although, as we shall see, not conservative enough for some) in the early years of Mindon's reign and many of his activities appear very similar to those followed by Nyanabhivamsa when the latter was prelate in the middle decades of Bò-daw-hpayà's reign.

12. *Dutiya-maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyì*, 371.

13. Royal Order, 24 June 1854, 9.380.

14. Langham-Carter, "Four Notables of the Lower Chindwin," 341–42.

When Mindon wanted to move his capital from Amarapura to Shwebo (formerly, Mok-hsò-bo) in September 1853, Nyeyya submitted a notice to the king that he should not do so, as Amarapura remained the best site for the capital, perhaps because he was satisfied with the monastic physical plant in Amarapura. Aside from the king, members of the royal family and court officials supported the position not of the throne, but rather of the chief of religious affairs.¹⁵ On 21 July 1854, orders went out for Bò-daw-hpayà's lists of religious lands and slaves to be updated. The new lists were to be sent to Nyeyya first, before they were handed to the king, probably indicating that it was Nyeyya who made the call for this information in the first place.¹⁶

Early in Mindon's reign, he and Nyeyya faced a serious challenge to the monastic order from a new lay movement. The Lower Chindwin Valley and points a little further south had witnessed a number of lay reform movements sometimes confused as forming together a single movement. It is possible, perhaps even probable, that they may have emerged in other areas outside of the Lower Chindwin or that these movements were not limited in their scope to this area of Burma, but the information we have concerning them pinpoints them to this area. One of the earliest of these movements was that of the Paramats, who emerged at Shin-pyu-gyun near the confluence of the Irrawaddy and Chindwin Rivers, during Bò-daw-hpayà's reign. *Paramat* was probably a corruption of *paramitas*, the ten perfections that lead to Buddha-hood. According to James G. Scott, they did not believe in worshipping images or at pagodas, preferring instead open fields, and they "prayed only to the Nyandaw, the Supreme Intelligence, which was supposed to exist as a mountain of fire exercising influence over mundane affairs."¹⁷ In other ways, they were not so much different from other lay Buddhists, reverencing ordinary monks, observing the ten precepts, and repeating, "the ordinary formula told over on the rosary; the Lord, the Law, and the Assembly, the three Precious Gems."¹⁸ Some scholars associate the emergence of this sect with Bò-daw-hpayà's reform of the Religion in 1812, suggesting that he "sided with the paramats."¹⁹ Given the timing and the negative views of monastic discipline by

15. Royal Order, 15 September 1853, 9.360–61.

16. Royal Order, 21 July 1854, 9.386.

17. J. G. Scott, *Burma: A Handbook of Practical Information* (London: Daniel O'Conner, 1906), 387.

18. *Ibid.*

19. This is clearly Htin Aung's conclusion in *A History of Burma*, 189.

both the king and the Paramats, that the two would be confused as allies is an attractive, but thus far unsubstantiated, explanation.

There were also "anti-clericals," to use Scott's terminology, or those perceived to be so. They had been popping up in Burma throughout the nineteenth century.²⁰ The "Mans" were one such anti-clerical sect, founded by Û Po, a Lower Chindwin scholar and one of Mindon's own doctors.²¹ Po supported reverence of the Buddha and the Dharma, but rejected the reverence of monks. The monastic order, he is said to have believed, was not based on the original Buddhist teachings and had developed afterward. Thus, Buddhists were not obligated to support the monks with the four necessities (food, medicine, shelter, and clothing). Further, monks were not the only ones who could achieve *nirvana*, ultimate release from the *samsara* cycle. Instead, anyone could achieve it by "overcoming the . . . Evils . . . The Evil of Renewed Existences, of Concupiscence; of Death; of Karma, the result of one's own actions; and of the Devadat, the Antibudh."²² Po, when brought before the king and questioned, claimed that a good monk was nowhere to be found. Shortly after, in 1856 or 1857, Mindon, probably with Nyeyya's encouragement or at least tacit approval, had Po impaled on an iron spike while soldiers hunted down Po's family and disciples. According to Scott, some of Po's disciples fled to British-ruled Lower Burma and remained there. Tin, probably with greater accuracy than Scott given the latter's problems with details on this and other subjects, claims, however, that students of Po's disciples carried on his teachings in Monywa on the Lower Chindwin River.²³

It is possible that the persecution of the Mans was related to a new effort at the purification of the monastic order begun by Mindon and Nyeyya in 1856. On 15 February 1856, a royal order went out listing the practices, such as the acceptance of certain kinds of property that would define a bad monk. On the same day, local headmen were notified that if they did not report a "bad" monk to provincial ecclesiastical authorities for interrogation, they would be punished. In late March 1856, Nyeyya issued a direct order that local monastic officers should examine the monks in the royal capital and identify bad ones, such as those making gold or silver or

20. Scott, *Burma*, 387.

21. Ibid; Tin explains that he was a *dat-saya-gyi*, a Burmese doctor, who was skilled in the Pali and Sanskrit literature. Tin, *Myan-ma-mìn Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 3.147.

22. Scott, *Burma*, 388.

23. Tin, *Myan-ma-mìn Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 3.147; Scott, *Handbook of Practical Information*, 388.

attending *pwe* performances. In another direct order, Nyeyya ordered monks to stop eating elephant and horse meat. Perhaps feeling now that the central monastic institutions needed a fresher start, Nyeyya agreed with Mindon's decision to erect a new capital at Mandalay, although here too, we find continuity, as it was ordered to be built on a plan similar to that followed by Bò-daw-hpayà in building Amarapura for the first time, in 1782.²⁴

Undisciplined monks were not the only problem facing Mindon and Nyeyya. While Nyeyya presided over the monastic order, a number of monastic sects (as opposed to the lay anti-clerical sects), known as the "Mindon sects," were also emerging. Although termed in many ways by nineteenth-century observers, Mendelson has categorized them into three main sects—the Sudhamma (which has been discussed extensively in earlier chapters) the Dwaya, and the Shwegyin, as well as two minor (at least initially) ones: the Hngetwin and the Pakokku.²⁵ Until the fissure, Sudhamma teachings represented the state-supported orthodoxy, Sudhamma monks being those who accepted the authority of the chief of religious affairs and the Sudhamma Council at the capital that administered the monastic order. Htin Aung observes that the Sudhamma monks "had been without a rival for some eighty years," although this view probably grants too much to the image of unity provided by Nyanabhivamsa and Paññasami in their religious histories.²⁶ In any event, at least until the emergence of major rival sects in the mid-nineteenth century, the Sudhamma formed the main monastic order and were thus not technically a sect.

It is difficult to say precisely when the process of factionalism began. As discussed in chapter 1, the eighteenth century saw a monastic order divided sometimes between *gamavasi* and *aranyavasi* monks and, perhaps more frequently, over the robe controversy. Bò-daw-hpayà, in the final years of his reign, and later Ba-gyi-daw, eased the monastic purification efforts set in motion by Nyanabhivamsa and Bò-daw-hpayà, especially in

24. Royal Order, 25 March 1856, 9.442; Royal Order, 15 February 1856, 9.433–38; Royal Order, 15 February 1856, 9.439; Royal Order, 25 March 1856, 9.441; Royal Order, 16 September 1856, 9.445; Royal Order, 13 January 1857, 9.458.

25. Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 91, 94. Mendelson also refers to the Welawun, but this Lower Burmese sect appears to be a late nineteenth century development.

26. Maung Htin Aung, comp. and tr., *Burmese Monk's Tales* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 21.

1812. Looking at Burma as a whole, the most serious handicap in view of monastic unity was the fact that over the course of the nineteenth century, parts of Burma were removed from royal control. Thus, in Arakan, for example, we find the rise of monastic sects that were autonomous of the actual control of the king and the chief of religious affairs, although monks here and in Lower Burma still considered the chief of religious affairs and the throne as the most important religious authorities.²⁷ However, without royal control, it was difficult to restrict monastic developments outside of Burmese territory.

Htin Aung points to two developments that are also relevant to monastic unity during this period. Both Kòn-baung officials and large numbers of monks, both Burman and Mon, from Lower Burma fled north. The flight of centrally appointed governors and other administrative officers was enormous, leaving behind administrative chaos in Lower Burma.²⁸ At a time when Mindon wanted to placate the British and thus gain time to strengthen Kòn-baung Burma, these officials, including some one hundred ex-governors and other important officers, who were "very badly off," began to petition the court to be allowed to return to Lower Burma to try their chances there. Mindon was especially concerned that "some of them might slip away quietly with the purpose of causing disturbances" in British territory.²⁹ To prevent this, Mindon resettled them in the old and abandoned capital of Ava to keep them under closer royal watch.³⁰ As for the arrival of numerous refugee monks from areas far distant from the capital, they almost certainly brought less orthodox, or perhaps among some, even stricter interpretations of the Vinaya. One might conjecture that this put both an additional drain on monastic resources and possibly raised the sense of uncertainty at a time when the kingdom had slumped to its lowest political and economic position. This development may well have contributed to the other development mentioned by Htin Aung.

27. See Michael W. Charney, "Beyond State-centered Histories in Western Burma, Missionizing Monks and Intra-Regional Migrants in the Arakan Littoral, c. 1784–1860," in *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200–1800*, ed. Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider, 213–24 (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002).

28. Htin Aung, *Burmese Monk's Tales*, 15; Cady, *History of Modern Burma*, 89.

29. Hall ed., "Spears to Phayre," in *Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence*, 6 August 1854, 230.

30. He also provided them with houses and twenty to one hundred baskets of rice (likely per month), depending on the number of their followers, for sustenance. Hall ed., "Spears to Phayre," in *Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence*, 6 August 1854, 230.

After Mindon and Nyeyya's religious reforms of the early years of the reign directed at lax monks, some senior monks began to encourage more careful observance of *aranyavasi*, as opposed to *gamavasi*, practices. This set off a gradual migration of monks from their monasteries in the royal capital to more secluded monasteries in the Sagaing hills. As Htin Aung explains, "[t]heir pupils followed . . . Very soon the hills became dotted with brick monasteries, preaching halls, and rest houses . . ."³¹ Other monks, such as the Hngetwin *hsayadaw* moved to even more isolated locations where they preached the same kind of strict monastic rules that had characterized earlier *aranyavasi* practices in Bò-daw-hpayà's reign.

In this climate of uncertainty and self-induced asceticism, the various sects mentioned above found their origin, naturally, in their discontent with the chief of religious affairs and the Sudhamma Council, which had grown accustomed to close interaction with the court and its patronage. Although Nyeyya himself had pushed for monastic reform in the 1850s, these efforts were seen as insufficient by monastic critics who disagreed with the Sudhamma view on various aspects of the Vinaya Code. The forest-dwelling Hngetwin *hsayadaw*, for example, challenged the Sudhamma Council on five general doctrinal points, arguing that there should be no pagoda offerings (candles, food, water, etc.), donations to monks should be to the monastic order as a whole, and monks should circulate every year or so. He also claimed that it was not necessary for laymen to repeat the Five Precepts after the monks because, as good Buddhists, they should be following these precepts anyway. Monks should also not attend any social function at which there was dancing or music. His central argument, not unusual for a strict *aranyavasi* monk, was that meditative practices were at the core of proper religious practices for the laity as well as the monks and that patronage alone was insufficient. Unable to bring about change in Mandalay, he ultimately moved to Lower Burma. Although he intended only to reform the monastic order and not establish a separate sect, the Hngetwin sect was officially established in 1885.³²

The Dwaya sect, another "Mindon sect," emerged from the teachings of the Okpo *hsayadaw*, although Mendelson suggests that it was rooted in the teachings of the Atin monks whom Nyanabhivamsa, Tun Nyo, and Bò-daw-hpayà had earlier suppressed in favor of the Ayouns.³³ The views

31. Htin Aung, *Burmese Monk's Tales*, 19–20.

32. Ibid., 21, 22; Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 106–11.

33. Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 92–93.

proffered by this monk, closely connected to the Shwegyin monks, were a direct challenge to Nyeyya and the Sudhamma Council.³⁴ The Okpo *hsayadaw*, like the Hngetwin *hsayadaw*, disagreed with the Sudhamma Council on various points of the interpretation of the Vinaya, arguing that observance of the Vinaya was necessary but anything more than modest donations to the monastic order were not. The reason for this was, he argued, that what mattered was not one's physical acts but their mental attitude or intentions. Thus, the intention to make a donation to the monastic order earned as much merit as actually having done so and, vice versa, the intention to commit a crime earned as much demerit as actually having done so. As Htin Aung points out, this meant that killing someone accidentally was also demerit free. Further, also like the Hngetwin *hsayadaw*, the Okpo *hsayadaw* forbade his disciples from attending religious festivities that were accompanied by music or dancing. The Okpo *hsayadaw* also made known his general dissatisfaction with the Sudhamma ordination procedures. He even went so far to demonstrate his discontent with mainstream religious views as to violate the prohibition against wearing sandals at pagodas in Prome and Yangon.³⁵ Of course, when Mindon held the Fifth Synod, the Okpo *hsayadaw* refused to participate.³⁶

Of the three major sects, the Shwegyin sect has captured the greatest share of scholarly attention. The Shwegyin *hsayadaw*, Shin Zagara, intended, like the other monks mentioned above, only to reform the monastic order and not to divide it, for all monks are obliged to pursue monastic unity. This monk saw his views as representing something in between the puritanical Hngetwin and Okpo *hsayadaws*, on the one hand, and the "moderate" Nyeyya and Sudhamma Council, on the other. Like the former, Zagara argued that monks had become too lax and accustomed to wealth from donations and that it was up to the monastic order to be self-regulatory, without interference from the court. Zagara suggested moderate reforms, including forbidding the chewing of betel and the smoking of tobacco from the afternoon.³⁷ The reason that Burmese monastic robes changed from bright yellow to brown from the mid-nineteenth century is also because Zagara preached that such bright colors

34. The Okpo *hsayadaw* and Zagara had been fellow pupils. Stewart, *Buddhism in Burma*, 7.

35. Htin Aung, *Burmese Monk's Tales*, 22–23; Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 94.

36. Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 96.

37. Htin Aung, *Burmese Monk's Tales*, 24–25.

were not appropriate for monastic attire. Instead, he argued, monastic robes should be colored with dye from tree bark.³⁸ The sect began in Mindon's reign and as Mendelson has found, origin stories divide on whether it went its separate way in 1859 because Nyeyya treated Zagara rudely or if it was Zagara who refused to come to the capital and submit to Nyeyya. By contrast to Nyeyya's feelings about this monk, Zagara's views, reform-oriented and moderate, appealed to Mindon. Zagara is said to have been brought to Mindon's attention twice before. On the first occasion, the *hsayadaw* decided a case against a local monk and challengers brought the matter to Mindon's attention. Mindon was impressed with the *hsayadaw*'s clear understanding of the Vinaya as demonstrated by his decision. On the second occasion, Mindon and the crown prince listened to the *hsayadaw*'s sermon when they met him in a village rest house. Mindon later brought the monk to the capital and donated to him a monastery as well as four other buildings.³⁹

After Zagara's alienation from Nyeyya, the former complained to Mindon, explaining that he could not accept Nyeyya's authority (whether personally or as the ecclesiastical head is unclear) and thus he wished royal permission to abandon the capital and live in the forests. Mindon responded by declaring the Shwegyin a sect independent of the authority of the Sudhamma Council, marking the precise moment of the official birth of the sect.⁴⁰ On Nyeyya's death in 1866, Mindon nearly made Zagara the chief of religious affairs. Mindon's chief queen, however, supported the appointment of the Hngetwin *hsayadaw* and to avoid a schism (perhaps in the royal bed as well as among the monks), Mindon did not appoint a replacement as chief of religious affairs. Ironically, in 1858, Mindon put Zagara, a reform (*thathana-pyu*) monk, in charge of monastic reform in the Lower Chindwin, including the towns of Alon (Badon), Dipe-yin, Pán-kyi, Taloub, Ratana-thika, Kale, and Raza-kyo—the general area from which Nyanabhivamsa, Tun Nyo, Nyeyya, Paññasami, and other members of their influential monastic and literati clique had come.⁴¹

38. Personal communication from local literati in Monywa in March 2003.

39. Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 96–97, 100–101.

40. Ferguson does not provide his sources for this account, but it seems likely to have been the case. John P. Ferguson, "The Quest for Legitimation by Burmese Monks and Kings: The Case of the Shwegyin Sect (19th & 20th Centuries)," in *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos, and Burma*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith, 73 (Chambersburg: Anima Books, 1978).

41. Htin Aung, *Burmese Monk's Tales*, 25; Shwe-hintha, *Shwe-gyin-nikaya-thathana-win*, 107; Ferguson, "Quest for Legitimation," 75.

The monks in the area had given in to corrupt practices and the Religion there was desperately in need of reform. Such charges were frequently leveled against monks whom the throne wanted to punish and it may be a sign that Mindon may have hoped to somehow use Zagara to put some distance between himself and religious policies followed in the Nyeyya years.

The limitations of royal control and the factional splits among monks were not unique to Burma, for in Sri Lanka as well, the kingship had been brought to an end and monks there divided into competing sects. These sects sent representatives to the Burmese court, arriving in several groups in 1857, 1858, and 1860. In each case, Mindon built a monastery for them within Nyeyya's group of monasteries, where the court provided them with the four requisites. More importantly, Nyeyya gave his judgment in each case regarding their complaints over their sectarian rivals. Following this, Nyeyya taught them and oversaw the ordination of the novices and re-ordination of the monks who had come on the missions.⁴²

Despite increasing monastic divisions, an image of unity was provided by Nyeyya's student and fellow Maungdaung villager, Paññasami. Paññasami's most famous work, the *Lineage of the Religion*, was an extended history of the Religion in Burma (and elsewhere). Like the *Glass Palace Chronicle's* incorporation of the *Great Chronicle*, Paññasami incorporated, frequently verbatim, the narrative of Nyanabhivamsa's *Treatise on the Religion*. He also added, however, extensive material on religious developments not covered by Nyanabhivamsa, primarily those occurring after Nyanabhivamsa's death in 1833. The stated purpose for writing the history was to inform a group of visiting Sri Lankan monks of the history of the Religion. However, it is also a work that strongly favors the sitting king, Mindon. Like Nyanabhivamsa, Paññasami cleansed his history of developments unfavorable to the reigning sovereign. Nor does Paññasami include material that would cast a negative light on his monastic teacher. As this is our main indigenous source for religious developments in the first decade of Mindon's reign and for much of Nyeyya's tenure as chief of religious affairs, it would appear probable that we are not told everything.

From the mid-1860s, Mindon paid closer attention to the Buddhist dimensions of his kingship. In June 1864, a huge white marble block was brought to Mandalay for the sculpting of what would become the Kyauktaw-gyi Buddha statue. Mindon had a temporary palace erected near the

site to observe its progress and when it was completed, on 16 May 1865, he ordered a major procession, embodying his court, chief ministers, and military regiments, to dedicate it. The following month (June 1865), he had his chief sons swear before an image of the Buddha an oath that they would not act "against the welfare of the king," or violate the tenets of Buddhism. Again, we also find a Kòn-baung ruler focusing on the compilation of a corrected copy of the three books of the Pali canon. Mindon had begun making copies of these texts in early 1865, because the royal palm-leaf copies had begun to decay. He subsequently moved further toward the permanence of his corrected texts than had Bò-daw-hpayà. Mindon had the corrected Pali text inscribed on 729 stone slabs that were then placed in their own individual stupas surrounding the main stupa of the Ku thodaw Pagoda. This project was enormous and it took the labor of fifty sculptors, with frequent checking of the product by learned monks, some five years to complete it.⁴³

The "Apotheosis of Kingship"⁴⁴

Burmese kingship still rested on the old formula of Buddhist kingship clarified by Bò-daw-hpayà, Nyanabhivamsa, and other Lower Chindwin monastic and lay literati in the 1780s and after. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, this formula no longer held the currency it once had. This change was not so much due to the new kinds of information coming to Burma from Europe, but to problems more fundamental to the Kòn-baung state, ironically because of the strengthening of the kingship.

Mindon did not replace Nyeyya as chief of religious affairs when he died in 1865. As Stewart once observed, "Someone has said of King Mindon that he was his own Prime Minister. For the greater part of his reign he was his own Thathanabaing."⁴⁵ This was certainly empowering to royal authority, for now the king directly supervised the Sudhamma Council without an

43. Charles Duroiselle, *Pageant of King Mindon Leaving His Palace on a Visit to the Kyauktawgyi Buddha Image at Mandalay* (1865) (Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1925), i-iii; Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma*, 1.1, 51-52, 61, 64.

44. As far as the author is aware, this phrase, in the context of Southeast Asian historiography, was coined by Bill Frederick, who used it in his lectures, which the author attended while a MA student at Ohio University in 1991-1993.

45. Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 114; Stewart, *Buddhism in Burma*, 7.

42. Paññasami, *Sasanavamsa*, 160-61.

intermediary and through the Council, he commanded the religious hierarchy of ecclesiastical officers, including the *gaing-ouks* and *gaing-dauks* who supervised the monastic order at the local level. The Sudhamma Council occupied an ecclesiastical administrative position between the chief of religious affairs and the monastic order as a whole. He sought their guidance and they relayed his orders. Although there was no longer a chief of religious affairs, the Council and the local ecclesiastical officers continued to provide stable monastic administration. Mindon thus had no administrative need for a chief of religious affairs.

The main reason why Mindon did not immediately appoint a chief of religious affairs was that he and the chief queen had differing opinions on whom should be appointed and he wished to avoid monastic schism. His hesitance to appoint another chief of religious affairs, however, was probably prompted in part by the attempted coup of 1866. The king evidently realized that his brother's assassination was part of a larger move against them both. Thus, Mindon spent much of 1866–1867 holding on to his throne and attempting to bring the kingdom back under tight royal authority. After suppressing the rebels, Mindon named neither a crown prince nor a chief of religious affairs. Upon taking the throne, a royal order attributed to Thibaw explained that Mindon thought it would be better to have the Religion managed by several people instead of just one chief of religious affairs.⁴⁶ Mindon probably had other motives. By not appointing a chief of religious affairs, Mindon could achieve two things. First, the absence of a chief of religious affairs, an alternative authority, would increase his authority, just challenged twice, as guardian of the Religion. Second, it would also make it easier for him to engage in Buddhist reforms that would further enhance his stature.⁴⁷

From 1867, Mindon, through the Sudhamma Council, began to issue a number of orders to the main local ecclesiastical officers. He began doing so, it was explained, in part, because the 1866 rebellion had encouraged a lack of discipline among the monks. In mid-May 1867, he began, as Nyeyya had done a decade earlier, by providing a tedious list of practices that made one a bad monk, such as giving flowers. Mindon also appears to have begun to use local ecclesiastical officers to help strengthen the court's reach into the countryside. We find Mindon using the Sudhamma Coun-

cil, the *gaing-ouks*, and the *gaing-dauks* to interfere with local officials who continued to seize former rebels involved in the events of 1866 who had been pardoned by the general amnesty Mindon had declared.⁴⁸ In 1868, *gaing-ouks*, *gaing-dauks*, and the Sudhamma Council also aided the court in identifying people who had fled due to the 1866 rebellion, presumably having gone to Lower Burma, and by proposing to them not only the already granted amnesty but also five-year tax exemptions as further encouragement to return. The ecclesiastical officers would then submit a list to Mindon of the people who then returned.⁴⁹ The main importance of this development is that we see again a reflection of Bò-daw-hpayà, upon whom Mindon had modeled himself previously, Mindon borrowing Bò-daw-hpayà's town plans used for building Amarapura, sponsoring a major purification effort, suppressing anti-clericals in an uncharacteristically violent fashion, and even depending upon a chief of religious affairs drawn from the Lower Chindwin (and, more particularly, another Maungdaung man). Facing difficult political problems that could not be solved easily and which wore away at his authority, Mindon, like Bò-daw-hpayà, assumed active leadership in the Religion. Moreover, this appears to be a not atypical response to similar situations by Buddhist rulers elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Mindon's next moves grant further evidence of the validity of these comparisons.

By the 1870s, Mindon had moved more closely to the model of a universal ruler and protector of the Religion beyond the confines of the Kòn-baung state. In 1871, with British permission, Mindon visited British Rangoon and installed a new finial on the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, a practice among Kòn-baung rulers when they still possessed Lower Burma. Of broader significance was Mindon's summoning of the Fifth Great Buddhist Synod from 15 April 1871 until 12 September 1871. The Synod attended by 2,400 monks, was the first such synod held in two thousand years and the first sponsored by a Burmese king. The monks "recited and rehearsed" the Pali canon over a period of five months.⁵⁰ Mendelson suggests that the failure of Mindon's synod to reunify the monastic order was due to the fact that the sects were unresponsive to attempts by Mindon to bring them under control because they already performed the function

48. Royal Order, 15 May 1867, 9.638; Royal Order 15 May 1867, 9.637; Royal Order, May 1867, 9.639.

49. Royal Order, 19 January 1868, 9.655.

50. Royal Order, 10 September 1871, 9.748; Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma*, 1.1, 66–67; Cady, *History of Modern Burma*, 103.

46. Royal Order, 14 November 1878, 9.916.

47. This would still have left him in a weak doctrinal position. Stewart, *Buddhism in Burma*, 7.

that a chief of religious affairs would have, had one been reappointed by Mindon in 1866. They were better organized than the entire monastic order had been in earlier periods and were able to offer social coherence in the face of "the disintegrative forces in the colonial acculturation process" (in Lower Burma).⁵¹ Thus, Mendelson does not see the new sects that emerged in Mindon's reign as attempts to provide new answers to the new challenges facing Burma at mid-century, but rather were "highly conservative" as each attempted to create *the* pure Burmese monastic community "within themselves."⁵²

As we will see, Mindon's responses were varied. For commerce, financial and military strength, and foreign relations, Mindon looked to the new Western learning that became increasingly available to the Burmese while he simultaneously looked to more conservative sources of legitimacy for solutions to problems relating to the Religion and the weaknesses of kingship. Mindon, just as Bò-daw-hpayà had, turned to religious orthodoxy and the pursuit of correct Pali texts to strengthen his kingship. Moreover, in a move that forcefully recalls the example of Bò-daw-hpayà, Mindon began, in December 1876, construction near Mandalay of a pagoda intended to be the largest building on earth. Despite significant labor, however, the intended gargantuan building never rose very high above its foundations by the time of Mindon's death.⁵³

As we have seen, Mindon sought in religion and culture ways to embellish the royal image during some of its most troubling political and economic times. The loss of Lower Burma and weakened royal authority over texts, as discussed in the previous chapter in the context of information technology and Christian missionaries, threatened to diminish the aura of the court. Over the course of his reign, however, Mindon reinforced the kingship's place in the religious affairs of the kingdom with greater success than had Bò-daw-hpayà after 1812. Mindon had taken the kingship from its relatively weakened state under Ba-gyi-daw, Thayawaddy, and Pagan (and even in the pre-1866 years of his reign) to a level of authority unseen since the glory days of Hsin-pyu-shin and Alaung-hpayà. That Mindon could accomplish this in the context of profound monastic sectarian cleavages indicates the sophistication of Mindon's approach to guarding over the Religion. The throne, in other words, had made an important transi-

tion from the "traditional" relationship between the throne and the monastic order to a new and—in view of the continuity of the relationship between a throne/state that patronizes the Religion while not opposing monastic sectarianism as we see today in Burma—modern relationship. This spelled the end of the Sudhamma Restoration and the formula that Nyanabhivamsa, Tun Nyo, and Bò-daw-hpayà had established for Burmese kingship in the late eighteenth century.

51. Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 113.

52. *Ibid.*, 112.

53. Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma*, 1.1, 76–77.

chapter ten

The Mandalay-ket-thas

After watching a play at the Crystal Palace in London in 1872, the Lower Chindwin scholar and official Burmese envoy to Great Britain, Gaung, and his party were brought before an amazing contraption that defied understanding. An Orientalist's fantasy, the "mechanical Turk" was a large, bearded figure, head donned by a turban (*kaung-baung-gyi*), and mouth puffing away at a long Turkish pipe.¹ The Turk was no human in disguise; he was an *automaton*, the kind of mechanical toy that, like mechanical paintings with their moving pieces, had emerged because of early advances in European clockwork mechanisms in the eighteenth century. Created by Wolfgang von Kempelen, and first revealed to the Viennese Court in 1770, the Turk was the most incredible *automaton* of them all. The Turk could easily beat human opponents at chess (*sik-duyin*),² its main function, moving its arms and hands, picking up pieces and repositioning them, countering each move by the human opponent until it had achieved checkmate. It had beaten some of the best minds of the time, including both Napoleon Bonaparte and Benjamin Franklin.³ The Burmese delegation watched it beat a human opponent as well during their visit. Intrigued, they circled the Turk, examined it, and recorded in the diary of the mission that they found no one inside the Turk, only machinery (*sek-ki-ri-ya*), the kind that performed the operations of many other complex European machines. When the Burmese observers asked the operator if

they could watch the Turk play another game, the operator turned the key and it began to play again. As the operator made his moves, the Turk shook (*ka*) his head at each unwise move and nodded (*nyeit*) at each wise move.⁴ The astonished Burmese delegation never figured out the secrets of this machine, impressing them even more that some kinds of European learning were without parallel in Burma.

The secret to the mechanical Turk indeed had more to do with the art of magic than with machinery, but the latter was essential for its success. The mechanical Turk was one of the greatest hoaxes of European history. In addition to luminaries such as Bonaparte and Franklin, even European mechanics of the 1870s, Gaung's diary reports, could not understand its workings.⁵ The Turk's operator was actually more of a stage magician than anything else. A series of inner compartments and sliding doors in the cabinet below the chessboard hid a human opponent who was not revealed even when the majority of the cabinet was opened up for inspection. The trickery was believable because of its "clockwork," but useless, internal machinery.⁶

Gaung certainly did not accept the Turk as magic, even though he could not explain it. This encounter was different from that of the Burmese visitors to Calcutta in the 1830s. They had viewed the electro-magnetic machine as a magical thing in itself and with no notion of what a machine was, made no attempt to investigate how it worked. Gaung, however, surveyed the Turk in order to locate the machinery that made it work. Like many other Burmese of his own time, Gaung was familiar with Western machines and had come to believe that Western machinery, through the functions of its internal parts, could accomplish anything if it was built in the correct way. Ironically, this familiarity and faith blinded him to the realities of the Turk. Mesmerized, Gaung brought his accounts of the Turk, yet another example of the wonders of Western learning, back to Burma and to Burmese readers. Few among them questioned what they read in Gaung's account, for they shared with Gaung his confidence in Western learning.

Burmese historiography attributes a break in the Kòn-baung period, or rather, a new beginning, from the reign of Mindon, particularly when that king established a new capital at Mandalay. Although Mindon and Thibaw

1. Kin-wun Min-gyi, *Landan-myo-thwa-ne-sin-hmat sa-dàn*, 2.456.

2. The Burmese envoys would have had a vague understanding of the game, as the Burmese had their own, different, version. For a diagram of the Burmese chessboard and pieces, see *Myanma-Ingalei-Abhidan*, 120.

3. The history of the mechanical Turk, from which the account draws, is provided in Tom Standage, *The Mechanical Turk: The True Story of the Chess-Playing Machine That Fooled the World* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

4. Kin-wun Min-gyi, *Landan-myo-thwa-ne-sin-hmat sa-dàn*, 2.456–57.

5. The diary calls them "tho-hsaung-sek-hsaya." *Sek-hsaya* is a mechanic. *Tho-hsaung* refers to Europeans. Kin-wun Min-gyi, *Landan-myo-thwa-ne-sin-hmat sa-dàn*, 2.457.

6. Standage, *Mechanical Turk*, 24.

were simply the last two kings of the Kòn-baung Dynasty, their reigns are grouped together and periodized as "Mandalay-ket" meaning "Mandalay Period."⁷ This historiography reflects a realization that Burma was different under these two reigns than it had been under the previous Kòn-baung kings. *Mandalay-ket* represents a number of feelings, some contradictory. On the one hand, it was a time when the fortunes of the Kòn-baung Empire were at their lowest ebb. The kingdom was smaller, territorially, than it had been since the early sixteenth century. Its armies had been humbled in two Anglo-Burmese Wars. Burma's access to the maritime world was severed and, with British administrators enforcing tighter border restrictions, Kòn-baung Burma was more isolated from the outside world than at any other time in its history. The court and the kingdom also faced dire economic problems. On the other hand, the fact that this was the last period of precolonial independence grants to the court a kind of romantic appeal, its attempts to survive representing a kind of last stand against European expansion. It was also a period of innovations, when Burmese began to apply European learning in significant ways. To a limited extent, Burma began to build factories, administrative officials were put on salary, and royal steamboats began to ply the Irrawaddy River waters in Upper Burma. Mindon built a grand new capital, Mandalay, and this became the staging ground for renewed royal attempts to experiment with Western learning.

Although this period has received special terminology, the generation or generations who lived during this time have not. This is certainly an oversight. Burmese elites were not the only ones who shared in the new experiences and mixed feelings of the period. Defeated Burmese soldiers carried news of their defeat before British arms back to their home villages and both traders and boatmen could see firsthand the steamboats, the British garrisons further downriver, and the new goods imported from industrializing Europe (although these had already started to trickle in earlier). Palace women, courtiers, royal servants, guards, factory workers, revenue collectors, and an endless list of members of other cross-sections of the Burmese populace were aware of the changes taking place. A good indication of this widespread awareness was that large numbers of Upper

7. U Myo Myint, "Towards a Bibliography of the Life and Time of Mindon, King of Myanmar, 1853–1878," in *Études Birmanes*, ed. Pierre Pichard and François Robinne (Paris: EFEO, 1998), 84.

Burmese began to emigrate to British Burma when economic prosperity picked up there in the late 1850s. *Mandalay-ket-tha*, "people of the Mandalay Period," thus seems to be an appropriate way to term the generation of Burmese caught midway between the end of the Second Anglo-Burmese War and the beginning of the Third.

European Learning Applied

An earlier generation of Burmese pioneers in Western learning, such as Makkara, had helped to ensure that Western learning would not be abandoned after early flirtations with it. Now, from the mid-1850s, *Mandalay-ket-thas* were growing even more familiar with Western learning and the manifestations of its application on both sides of the Anglo-Burmese border. Some of the major towns that fell under British rule had already been in intimate contact with Europeans for centuries and in much the same way. Towns such as Tavoy, Mergui, Yangon, and Bassein hosted a range of Europeans, from traders to fugitives from justice. Numerous Europeans found employment under local officials and some even rose to the level of important officials as well. Many were not the European men of learning who would eventually visit and write about Upper Burma from the late eighteenth century. Nevertheless, their presence provided opportunities for the Burmese to observe and study these strangers and at least some of the Burmese in the towns mentioned above gained a degree of familiarity with Europeans and their ways, explaining why those Burmese literati who were most aware of Western knowledge came from such towns. For the general population this influence must have been minimal. Europeans had been present in Yangon (and Syriam nearby) for centuries, first in limited numbers as merchants, but later were joined by American Baptist missionaries. Nevertheless, their interaction with the local population was relatively limited given that they were simply one small element in a cosmopolitan social milieu of foreigners from all over Asia. The small scale, backwater settlements of Europeans at Akyab, Maulmain, and Tavoy were all subject to geographical constraints that limited interaction with Burma proper. However, after these three towns were lost to the British according to the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826 and the annexation of Lower Burma after 1852, Burmese contact with Europeans grew dramatically.

The extension of British East India Company rule over Lower Burma

allowed the British to transform the local landscape following the European model.⁸ Yangon, renamed "Rangoon," was the flower of the colony. In pre-1852 days, the direction of Yangon's urban growth was geared around local physical and cultural topography, physical obstacles and the location of pagodas determining the course of roads and the arrangement of buildings. While a roughly symmetrical grid to this arrangement can be discerned, its anomalies and occasionally asymmetrical layout nonetheless did not agree with the principles followed in more recent European models of city planning.⁹ Aside from pagodas, perhaps saved from demolition due to their strong building materials and usefulness to the British for defensive purposes, Yangon had been leveled by the time that the British began civil planning early in 1853, under the direction of Commissioner of Lower Burma Phayre. The local population had also abandoned the town during the fighting and the British declared all land to be government land. British engineers and architects thus had a clean slate upon which to work. After port regulations, a customs system, and a postal service were established, the city was laid out along the long Strand Road fronting the Irrawaddy River, other streets being drawn up at right angles to this main thoroughfare, cut through by additional straight cross-streets thus forming rectangular city blocks. Land behind the Strand was reserved for mercantile establishments, water and drainage works were installed, and administrative buildings set up. The work took up the greater part of the 1850s.¹⁰

The degree of Burmese participation in any of these works remains unclear. Large numbers of Indian and Chinese immigrants fulfilled many of the labor requirements and occupied large sections of the city. Those Burmese who did settle in Yangon may indeed have been socially isolated, like the other ethnic communities portrayed in J. S. Furnivall's "plural society" model, each group meeting only in the market place.¹¹ However,

8. For a thorough study of the colonial transformation of Yangon (in comparison to Kuala Lumpur) in the last half of the nineteenth century, see Sarah Heminway Maxim, "The Resemblance in External Appearance: The Colonial Project in Kuala Lumpur and Rangoon" (PhD diss., Ithaca: Cornell University, 1992).

9. The layout of both Alaung-hpayà's and Thayawaddy's Yangon can be found in the backplates to B. R. Pearn, *A History of Rangoon* (Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press, 1939).

10. Ibid., 179, 182–97, passim; Grattan Geary, *Burma, After the Conquest. Viewed in Its Political, Social and Commercial Aspect, From Mandalay* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle, and Revington, 1886), 13.

11. Geary, *Burma, After the Conquest*, 12, 302; J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 202–12.

even in the market place, or along the streets, or in their work as common laborers, Burmese were confronting Western learning and its products on a daily basis. Those Burmese who took positions in the lower levels of the colonial administrative corps were also dealing with British law and the English language on a regular basis as well. It was Burmese officials and clerks (not far different from royal scribes) after all who translated colonial rules and regulations, legal texts, and other matters from English into Burmese. Gaung himself found that such officials were especially proud of their work. One such Lower Burmese official, Û Oùn, presented Gaung with eleven copies of his book, a translation of British civil law into Burmese.¹² As the economy, administration, and other relationships became intrinsically tied to the colonial port capital, the impressions that Burma was being transformed in radical new ways became firmer. To a certain extent, but on a much smaller scale, these changes were also taking place in the district administrative centers.

In rural Lower Burma, of course, the British impact was not as clear. Village headmen had been left in place, but even here, British institutions attempted to draw Burmese into a new system of knowledge although there were wide discrepancies. Two of the most important institutions that sat on opposite ends of the scale were the colonial hospital and the colonial prison. At the low end of the scale was the colonial hospital. Burmese medicine was a complex interplay of beliefs about the body, how it worked, and how illness should be treated. Before and during colonial rule, Burmese typically turned to *dat-hsayas* who focused on diagnosis through observation of bodily humors and treatment through diet, Beindaw *hsayas* who prescribed drugs utilizing Burma's abundant pharmacopeia, and others who treated illness as a negative influence of Nats.¹³ British attempts to conduct surgery on wounded Burmese during the war were connected with the high death rates that mid-nineteenth century European medicine produced. Colonial hospitals became feared places, where the sick went to die rather than to get well.¹⁴ Over the course of the next half-century, these

12. Gaung refers to this book as *Ta-yàma U-ba-dei*, which is a combination of "civil law" and "enacted law" (although the latter is also used to refer to customary law). Kin-wun Min-gyi, *Pyin-thit-naing-ngan-thwà né-sin-hmat sa-dàn*, ed. Pe Maung Tin, 178 (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1939).

13. *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Indigenous System of Medicine* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1951), 16.

14. European doctors raised this point. They found that the death rates of Burmese patients was high because Burmese only came to the hospital as a last resort, after their condition had become so bad that there was nothing that could be done. Atsuko Nakaya, personal communication.

perspectives changed only slightly as European medicine improved, mainly because of a sense of social and cultural distance from European and Indian doctors. It was really only in the twentieth century that indigenous doctors were trained in European medicine and allowed to treat fellow Burmese, for a facility to train such indigenous doctors was not opened until 1907 and most of those who went to study abroad prior to that time were usually Indians or Anglo-Indians.¹⁵ When Burmese paramedicals were sent out to rural areas, backed by government regulations enforcing vaccination on the local population, colonial medicine made greater inroads, but again this was a slow, long term, development.

At the high end of the scale was the colonial prison. Burmese drawn from all corners of British Burma experienced the kind of trouble that put them into British prisons run, coincidentally, by the physicians from the same Indian Medical Service that ran the hospitals. In the past, Burmese justice had been swift through execution or otherwise involved corporeal punishment. In addition to executions, however, British prisons also attempted to regiment inmates, drilling them according to European models of labor organization and time scheduling.¹⁶ Here, European medical treatment could not be refused and many Burmese patients, whether they liked it or not, became intimately familiar with syringes, scalpels, and drugs. More importantly, colonial prisons in Burma put prisoners to work and trained them in skills associated with Western technology. There was a prison printing press, which printed the numerous publications of government departments, and prisoners were put to work folding and binding the books. Others engaged in oil pressing and carpentry.¹⁷

Other institutions, such as the colonial education system, were slower in coming to those *Mandalay-ket-thas* living in British Burma, delaying further the impact of Western information. Aside from a few mission schools, indigenous education in British Burma was left primarily to the monasteries until the end of the nineteenth century. The two colonial "model" schools Gaung visited in Yangon in 1874, for example, included only a girl's school of 160 students, studying embroidery amongst other

15. As Furnivall explains: "among the Burman population less than ½% attended hospital, and in 1908, as in 1868, their reluctance was attributed" to the lack of indigenous physicians practicing European medicine. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, 120.

16. E. P. Frenchman, "Prisons," in *Twentieth Century Impressions of Burma: Its History, People, Commerce, Industries, and Resources*, ed. Arnold Wright (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1910), 255.

17. *Ibid.*, 256.

courses and a boy's school of 285 students, studying the English language, geography, and arithmetic (*a-ri-tha-ma-daik*).¹⁸ Burmese literati who engaged in publishing in Lower Burma also defended "traditional" Burmese learning by reprinting the old Burmese texts, including the *Treasured Precedents*, and even some of the newer pieces, representative of the older literature, on Burmese Buddhist law by Gaung. Maung Gyi, a Burmese clerk who lived in British Burma even presented two books on *dhammathats* to Gaung, indicating that "old" knowledge was by no means dead south of the colonial border.¹⁹

Most importantly, Upper and Lower Burma were politically bifurcated into independent and British Burma from the early 1850s. Although the Kòn-baung court was reticent to give up its claims to rule Lower Burma, it was in practice treated as a foreign country. This was more than just politics. Visits to Lower Burma, for example, are treated in Gaung's diaries much as he considered his tours of London and Paris. He visited schools, a colonial hospital, a museum, and other local sites of interest. However modest these contributions to the Burmese imagination were, they were still strange and exciting. Gaung's visit to the hospital included a look at a department dedicated to post-mortem examinations of corpses, something completely new to Burmese medicine, which did not include surgery much less what must have appeared to be the defilement of the human body. Indeed, the Burmese term used by Gaung for these examinations, *pyek-si*, is primarily used to mean ruination and destruction.²⁰ Even the museum, which, as Gaung observed, contained not much to see, attracted a bevy of monks and laymen, men and women, Mons, Burmans, and Shans, because it was the first museum ever seen in Burma.²¹

Lower Burma was becoming another world, but so too, albeit more slowly, was Upper Burma. *Mandalay-ket-thas* there were also becoming more familiar with Western learning. At about the same time, the kings of Burma and Siam, Mindon and Mongkut, had to embark on a series of financial, commercial, administrative and other reforms. In the case of Siam, the Bowring Treaty (1855), which granted the British commercial

18. Kin-wun Min-gyi, *Pyin-thit-naing-ngan-thwà né-sin-hmat sa-dàn*, 182.

19. *Ibid.*, 181.

20. *Ibid.*, 182. Atsuko Naono helped to put Gaung's observation into the overall context of precolonial Burmese medicine.

21. Gaung explains that it was the first museum in the three Talaing (Mon) countries, but does not indicate if it was the first in Burma as a whole. Kin-wun Min-gyi, *Pyin-thit-naing-ngan-thwà né-sin-hmat sa-dàn*, 182.

and other concessions, removed important sources of court income that had to be compensated for. The Burmese court, likewise, was deprived of its Lower Burmese provinces, as well as its remaining seaports, because of the Second Anglo-Burmese War. Just as in Siam, the Burmese court had to engage in substantial reforms to provide the court with new sources of revenue.

As discussed in earlier chapters, Lower Chindwin literati had opened up new channels for the flow of information and new ideas to Burma. However, this awareness did not include looking to Europe for information on how to manage the state. For such matters, Bò-daw-hpayà and other rulers of the early information revolution had looked into Sanskrit literature and older Burmese texts. There was an assumption that anything that was worth knowing could be found through analyzing these texts and to do so, one simply needed specialists, such as Nyanabhivamsa or the host of Brahmins now living in the royal capital, to read the old texts correctly. This view was coupled with a kind of arrogance that had emerged because their kingdom was the largest and most successful in Burmese history. European states, still lacking the kinds of technology of the late industrial revolution that would spread their rule over much of the globe, did not appear particularly intimidating. Indeed, in all previous encounters with the Europeans, Burmese forces ultimately got the upper hand. Furthermore, as the British withdrew, their continued occupation of Arakan, Assam, and Tenasserim notwithstanding, Burmese court writers were able to record that the Burmese had not really lost the war at all. The Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852–1853), however, changed these perspectives. It struck Mindon and others in his court, especially the king's younger brother and nominated heir Prince Kanaung, that the Europeans definitely had information necessary for the organization of powerful states that they themselves lacked. Moreover, they believed that if they could learn and adopt this information, Burma would be as strong as Britain and other European states.

At first, Europeans were hired to head numerous royal projects that sought to strengthen Burma in the European style. A British engineer was brought in to take charge of the royal war-boat builders. Europeans drilled the soldiery, trained the artillerymen, and set up factories and mills. As a result, by 1872, Mindon's Burma was running about fifty factories including a mint, which stamped gold and silver coins, a rice mill, munitions factories that made cannon, small arms, and ammunition, a sawmill, a sugar

mill, a cotton mill/textile factory, and an indigo processing plant.²² Printing presses, and Europeans and other foreigners who could run them, of course, were sought out as well. This influx of Europeans, especially of Frenchmen and Italians, continued into Thibaw's reign, Thibaw hiring an Italian officer named "Bari-beri" to instruct the Burmese troops in "war knowledge" and an Italian doctor as a court physician.²³ Thibaw's reign also saw the construction of an electricity plant in the southern garden of the royal palace that ran both "day and night."²⁴

Mindon also sent Burmese missions abroad to gather information on European administration and other facets of European state strength, and based his reforms on these recommendations. Following the European bureaucratic model, for example, Mindon embarked on an ambitious plan to place government officials on salaries. This would solve the problem of complicated eater-ship arrangements and the complications of the redistribution of awards to supporters upon royal succession. More importantly, it would also help to reduce the kind of autonomy that a personal revenue-grant provided to a minister, or even to the princes, three of whom, including Mindon himself, had successfully removed a sitting king from the throne. In most cases, the eater-ships were abolished.²⁵ Mindon also abolished other forms of non-central payments, including court fees paid to local officials for their legal decisions. There was significant resis-

22. Shway Yoe [J. G. Scott], *The Burman His Life and Notions* (London: MacMillan, 1910), 504–5; Scott, *Burma*, 300; Tin, *Kòn-baung-hset maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 3.390. For a description of the cotton mill and textile factory, located just north of Mandalay, see Maung Maung Tin, *Shwe-nàn-thoìn Wa-ha-ya Abhidan*, 1.178. For the munitions factory and the mint, see *ibid.*, 178–82; The economic promise of the iron foundry and the sugar and cotton mills, however, does not appear to have been realized prior to the annexation. Geary, *Burma, After the Conquest*, 303.

23. Tin, *Kòn-baung-hset maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 3.542, 634; Herbert Thirkell White, *A Civil Servant in Burma* (London: Edward Arnold, 1913), 28; Scott, *Burma*, 300. Maung Min Naing identifies the Italian military officer as Tarsillo Barberis, who arrived in Burma in 1881, and the physician as Barbieri d'Introini. Maung Min Naing, "Italians in the Service of Burmese Kings in Late Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 62.1–2 (December 1979): 180, 182. The latter is the A. Barbieri de Introini who left a personal account of his experiences in Thibaw's court in "Brevi cenni sulla Birmania." See Bennett, *Conference Under the Tamarind Tree*, 99, n. 145.

24. Maung Maung Tin, *Shwe-nàn-thoìn Wa-ha-ya Abhidan*, 1.181. *Hlyab-sik* is electricity and *hlyab-sik-mi* is electric light, so, presumably, this power plant was only intended to provide the palace with electric lighting.

25. Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma*, 1.2, 476–67; Cady, *History of Modern Burma*, 100–101.

tance by his chief ministers. As Mindon once complained of his four chief ministers and other high officials:

They are all against me for abolishing fees in [the] courts of justice, and for forbidding levies of money to be made as formerly, and for wishing to pay every one by salaries.²⁶

Mindon enacted these reforms anyway.

Among the Upper Burmese *Mandalay-ket-thas*, the *binya-daw-thins*, the "state scholars," had the most direct experience with Western learning (in Europe itself and in the European colonial centers). The inspiration for sending Burmese students abroad had come from Prince Kanaung. Rather than attempt to isolate the general population from Western knowledge by concentrating it into the hands of non-Burmese specialists, as Burmese courts had done in the past, Kanaung sought to educate future Burmese ministers in Western knowledge. Kanaung closely monitored these students and required them to produce books, written in Burmese, on what they had learned. These books were highly technical and included among their topics a wide range of specialized knowledge, including the natural sciences (botany, geology, and zoology), medicine (anatomy and physiology), mathematics (algebra, geometry, and trigonometry), architecture, geography, history, astronomy, navigation, military science, and mechanical engineering, including the steam engine and steam-powered looms.²⁷ Together these books provided a new body of Western knowledge, now updated, that compared favorably to the old *Cyclopaedia*, which had had such a great impact on the Burmese court in the earlier part of the century. Like Kanaung, who was killed in the failed coup of 1866, Mindon also sent Burmese students abroad to various European educational institutions based on what he saw as each country's natural abilities. France, for example, had been seen as the military equal of Britain and six Burmese were thus sent to France, "two to be educated as admirals, two as generals, and the remaining two as manufacturers of balloons."²⁸ After the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870–1871, however, Mindon changed his opinion and saw Prussians as the best bet for military skills, proposing to send three Burmese to be educated in Prussia, as a general, an

admiral, and a politician.²⁹ At least some of the state scholars were selected based on youth and family status.³⁰

One state scholar was Û Shwe O, the future Hpanyet assistant minister, who had been sent to Calcutta for his education when he was a child. He was one of three state scholars sent to France in 1879, where he studied at the Pantheon and the Imperial School of Arts and Manufactures (Paris), receiving a diploma in civil engineering. After almost twelve years of life and travel in Europe, he returned to Burma fluent in English, French, and Italian. Well known for his continued consorting with Europeans, Mindon made him the minister of glass manufactories. Maung Aung Thu was sent as a state scholar to France in December 1862, entered the Saint-Cyr military academy in 1865, and studied and traveled to other European countries such as Great Britain until returning to Burma in May 1872. Maung Mye was sent as a state scholar to Britain where he became fluent in English and knowledgeable in European commerce. Likewise, the Tá-bayin assistant minister of Thibaw's reign had also lived in Europe and had learned both English and French, and was thus made the Burmese envoy to France in 1882.³¹ There seemed to be a steady stream of such state scholars, one official mission alone bringing with it ten Burmese mechanics who were on their way to study in Britain.³² By the late 1860s, Mindon also funded the opening of an English school on the palace grounds for his sons and royal pages, as well as for several dozen boys apparently drawn from outside of the palace, to be educated by European teachers. Despite significant lapses in attendance, the school ran from 1869 until 1875. Although initial plans called for the education of one thousand Burmese boys, attendance does not seem to have exceeded ninety or so pupils at any one time. In any event, the school made a lasting impression on some of the princes, including student number twenty-seven, who came to the throne as King Thibaw in 1878.³³

29. Ibid.

30. This is indicated in a breakdown of one contingent of *binya-daw-thins* sent to the colonial administrative center for British India, Calcutta, in 1874, provided in Û Maung Maung Tin, "Shè-ga-binya-daw-thin-mya," *Myawaddy* 8.1 (1959): 26.

31. Shway Yoe, *Burman*, 496; Maung Htin Aung, "Kinwun Mingyi's Mission to the Court of Versailles, 1874," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 56.1 and 2 (1973): 10–11; Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma*, 1.1, 93–94, 1.2, 503.

32. The Burmese text describes them as *binya-daw-thin-sek-hsaya-ahmu-dan-lu*. Literally, this reads "state scholars-mechanics." Kin-wun Min-gyi, *Landan-myo-thwane-sin-hmat sa-dan*, 1.26.

33. Marks, *Forty Years in Burma*, 158, 171–72, 197, 207, 209–10, 218–19, 270, 272.

26. Yule, *Narrative*, 109.

27. Tin, "Introduction," 44–48.

28. Wheeler, *Journal of a Voyage*, 43.

The strength of the court's efforts to expose Burmese elites was severely tested in 1866, during Mindon's greatest crisis since his accession. Two of his sons, the Myingun and Myingundaing princes, hatched a plot to unseat the king. They also intended to kill Kanaung because he was the nominated heir to the throne and succeeded in doing so in the chamber of the Council of Ministers where they found him.³⁴ Mindon was away at his summer palace at the time and the deputed assassin failed to complete his mission; after a siege of the palace and some fighting in outer districts, the rebel princes fled to British Burma. Mindon soon faced another rebellion that year by the sons of the dead Kanaung.³⁵ Mindon was shaken by the coup and began to recall some of the state scholars, including Shwe O, to shore up his strength now that the court was deprived of Kanaung's services.³⁶

Some scholars have suggested that the 1866 coup attempt was a major setback for the court's attempts to appropriate Western knowledge to strengthen the kingdom.³⁷ Certainly, Mindon refused to openly nominate another heir for fear that the nominee would suffer the same fate as Kanaung. Mindon's heightened awareness of his vulnerability on the throne, however, reaffirmed his commitment to Western learning, in the continued hope of strengthening the throne. The state scholars, for example, continued to be sent to Europe, industries continued to be built, and new kinds of Western technology were adopted. Among the most important of the Western technology borrowed after 1866 was the telegraph, called *gyè-nàn* or "copper wire" (*gyè*, copper + *nàn*, metal wire). Much of the court's domestic security depended upon the flow of information between the court and officials in outlying towns and villages, just as easy communication with the outside world contributed to the success of its foreign relations. In the past, the court depended upon foot messengers, horse riders, and boats to carry messages. From 1870, however, the Burmese began constructing telegraph stations around the kingdom and telegraph lines between them. By 1873, Mindon had a telegraph network connecting the royal city with towns and villages throughout the kingdom, as well as a line to the British border (the Mandalay to Yangon/Rangoon line was built in 1870).³⁸

34. Stewart, *Buddhism in Burma*, 7; Browne, *Reminiscences*, 145, 148.

35. Browne, *Reminiscences*, 148.

36. Wheeler, *Journal of a Voyage*, 62.

37. Bagshawe, "Translator's Preface," 6.

38. Tin, *Myan-ma-mìn Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 5:77, 232; Myo Myint, "The Politics of Survival in Burma: Diplomacy and Statecraft in the Reign of King Mindon, 1853–1878," (PhD diss., Ithaca: Cornell University, 1987), 212; Bennett, *Conference under the Tamarind Tree*, 60.

The Mandalay-ket-tha Spirit

The "spirit" of the *Mandalay-ket-thas* was best represented by a belief that European learning could be understood through indigenous intellectual frameworks. The enhancement of the connection between the kingship and Mahasammata legitimated another Western reform. Mahasammata, Mindon's royal orders pointed out, had the right to levy a ten percent tax on everything in exchange for his having provided rulership to the people of the earth. Mindon thus inaugurated the *thathameda* tax in most of Burma outside of the royal city in order to finance the exchange of revenue lands for salaries as the means of remuneration for Kòn-baung officials. The *thathameda* tax was a ten percent "household income tax." Ideally, each household would pay it. The reform had a spotty record, however, because the revenues raised proved insufficient for the court's needs and governors continued to demand labor and extra-legal fees. The tax also encouraged the flight of royal service people from royal lands to Lower Burma and from fighting units to vocational service groups.³⁹

Literati who were more familiar with Western learning in the royal court or in those towns with regular and intimate contact with Europeans made earlier attempts to bring the old learning and the Western learning together. One such scholar was Û Pò Hlaing. Pò Hlaing's father had been the "Yindaw" chief minister in Thayawaddy's reign and both father and son were well versed in the old learning, both being noted Sanskrit scholars, and, like his father, Pò Hlaing became a minister (he was the Yaw interior minister). Both were also known, however, for their friendly intercourse with Europeans who visited the court.⁴⁰ Pò Hlaing's literary production was seemingly frantic, including works on astrology, commentaries on a Pali work on poetry, and other works.⁴¹ He also dabbled in medicine, including an attempt to fit European concepts of anatomy into a Buddhist framework. In doing so, however, he faced significant criticism from other literati who were not yet prepared to accept such iconoclastic efforts.

The Lower Chindwin scholar, Gaung, was, or rather became, one of these men. Born in 1822 in the Lower Chindwin village of Mindaingbin, he, like Nyanabhivamsa, was the son of a former military officer, became a

39. Cady, *History of Modern Burma*, 101, 103–4.

40. Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma*, 1.1, 33, 68.

41. John Alexander Stewart and C. W. Dunn, comps., *A Burmese English Dictionary* (Rangoon: University of Rangoon, 1940), 1.xv, ix, xxix, xviii; Bode, *Pali Literature of*

of parts of his mission.⁵⁴ One wonders what his Burmese readers thought or what Gaung intended for them to think of the new information brought to them through the diaries. This information must have been exciting, but, in view of the encroaching British Empire, this information must have been intimidating and frightening as well. Burmese society had not undergone the kind of specialization of labor and of manufacture that would allow it to industrialize in the same way. Mindon's westernization projects had not been an immediate success and even had they been, they were rudimentary.

Gaung may have hinted otherwise. Gaung devotes considerable space to his meeting with a Japanese state scholar whom he met in London. The Japanese student, dressed in European clothing, explained that Japanese state scholars had been sent all over the industrializing world (including the United States, England, France, Italy, Russia, Prussia, and Austria). There were currently about six hundred men and women abroad studying European ways. Moreover, he revealed that Japan had successfully built the same kinds of railways and factories and more were being built. The Japanese student pointed out that Burma, like Japan, was an Asian country, and if both cooperated, both would benefit tremendously.⁵⁵ Although this is interesting as an early hint of the vocabulary of Japanese expansion into Southeast Asia in the Second World War, its inclusion by Gaung may have been a purposeful message to his readers that industrialization and the specialization of labor, although developed in Europe, were not limited to Europeans. This knowledge, like the Indian knowledge that the Burmese had adopted before, was portable, copyable, and assimilable. Burma, although not a European country, was capable of organizing and industrializing, like its fellow Asian state, Meiji Japan.

Still, for the *Mandalay-ket-thas*, interaction with Western knowledge was a long, slow, but steady process and covered much of the nineteenth century. One has to exercise some caution in assessing the degree of influence of Western learning among the *Mandalay-ket-thas*. Western learning certainly provoked new considerations of society and the kingship. Some among the literati simply responded by attempting to revitalize older Burmese concepts. Pò Hlaing, for example, felt that Western learning was simply a different outgrowth from the same universal principles that informed mainstream Burmese beliefs. This did not mean that he

and the other leading thinkers among the *Mandalay-ket-thas* assumed that Europeans and Burmese shared a prior text, for there were some things, like the mechanical Turk, that Burmese did not *yet* understand and manifestations of Burmese thinking that Europeans did not *yet* understand. This was one reason why Burmese literati, including Mindon, had earlier encouraged Europeans to read Burmese philosophical and religious texts and why some of these literati were open to Western learning. Among at least some of the *Mandalay-ket-tha* thinkers, there was an underlying assumption that there was not a clear hierarchy of kinds of learning, but rather peculiar advantages to each. Burmese state and society would benefit by drawing upon the best elements of both. What constituted the "best" depended upon the particular vision of different literati. Moreover, some of these literati, who fall into a group which will be referred to as the "reformers" in the following chapter, faced considerable resistance from those blind or indifferent to the increasing interaction between Western and Burmese ideas that characterized the period.

Thus, for much of this period, the Burmese borrowed the products of Western knowledge, but most did not undertake to learn the underlying system of Western science. The court accepted interesting items and sometimes brought in Europeans to set up and run some kinds of European machinery and the Burmese occasionally borrowed Western knowledge for what it could say about things the Burmese already knew, such as astronomy. With the exception of Makkara there was little movement beyond the exposure to these ideas to inculcating these influences in a way that changed more fundamental understandings of the way that the world and nature worked. In other words, many Burmese were becoming familiar with Western technology but not with its science, that philosophy of life that understood that there were systems of knowledge that underlie everything. Nevertheless, beginning in Mindon's reign and as revealed in Gaung's diaries, Burmese began to accept that European societies had more than trains and guns; that they also had a different approach to knowledge that allowed them to build these and other things. For men such as Gaung, Burma needed more than the simple borrowing of the latest Western technology, Burmese society needed to be reorganized in ways that would set the right conditions for Burma to develop these understandings too. For Gaung, the first step was to bring the state under the control of enlightened men.

When Gaung returned from Europe, there were early indications that he too, like many literati before, had taken his experiences to heart. Euro-

54. Htin Aung, "Kinwun Mingyi's Mission to the Court of Versailles, 1874," 1.

55. Kin-wun Min-gyi, *Landan-myo-thwa-ne-sin-hmat sa-dân*, 2.165.

pean visitors to his home, for example, were pleasantly surprised with the “sumptuous European breakfast [that] had been prepared.”⁵⁶ Beyond such niceties, however, Gaung was deeply worried about the future of Burma. During his travels abroad, he had been so impressed by European government apparatus and military strength that he believed the only way for Burma to survive a third war with the British would be through a major overhaul of the government.⁵⁷ What pervades Gaung’s account of Europe is his impression of European power and order. Biscuit factories and postal offices were not impressive because of their machinery. Gaung was not a keeper of technical knowledge in the same way that Brahmans were keepers of the sacred ritual knowledge. There were European engineers in Burmese employ and Burmese training in Europe to be engineers who could perform that function. Instead, he was an administrator and he focused attention on things that he could understand, such as political relationships, organization of labor, and administrative structures, all things for which he had intimate knowledge of their Burmese counterparts. As an administrator, commander of the firearms, fiscal manager, border diplomat, and minister of state, Gaung was well prepared to learn and comprehend the workings of European states when he visited them. His dealings in European capitals were with fellow ministers (and business leaders) who appeared to have greater freedom of action in Europe than their Burmese counterparts had in Burma. Furthermore, Gaung arrived at a unique moment. The outbreak and end of the Franco-Prussian War led to the removal of Napoleon III, leaving a French government without an emperor. Thus, the European governments Gaung saw were constitutional monarchies like Great Britain and Italy and republics like France. Such powerful European states had clearly moved beyond the tight royal authority that Mindon sought to restore in the later years of his reign. Certainly, Gaung’s diaries never explicitly state this, for Mindon would have been a reader of the diaries. Nevertheless, Gaung implies this by focusing his attention on the strength of the administrative, commercial, and industrial pillars of the state and on the authority of busy ministers, businessmen, and factory owners, as well as by saying comparatively little about the monarchs of Europe.

56. Browne, *Reminiscences*, 42.

57. Bennett, *Conference under the Tamarind Tree*, 71.

chapter eleven

The State

Mandalay-ket-tha thinkers from many corners were keenly aware that intellectual and social forces taking shape during Mindon’s and Thibaw’s reigns raised questions about the kingship. This was something entirely new. Throughout this study, we have seen literati who tried to strengthen the throne, explain the roots of Burman-ness, write the state history, and establish religious orthodoxy. Nevertheless, these literati never questioned the political authority of the kingship. The kingship was a fundamental institution for the well being of Burmese society. The merits or demerits of the reigning sovereign determined the success of the kingdom in warfare, the success or failure of harvests, and the guarantee of a pure Buddhist monastic order without which one could not earn merit through their patronage of the Religion and other good works. There was little to challenge these beliefs. The Burmese “world” of the earlier decades of the dynasty consisted of Burma and those states that immediately surrounded it. All of these kingdoms were, or were perceived to be, governed by the same kind of kingship found in the Kòn-baung court.

The *Mandalay-ket-thas*, however, drew from a broader world their comparisons between the Burmese monarchy and a new range of states. Even those states, with which Burma was most familiar, such as Siam and China, were changing. The societies from which the Lower Chindwin literati of Bò-daw-hpayà’s reign had borrowed “Indian learning” had already fallen under British rule. It was also certainly the case that Burma had already lost two wars with the British, and substantial territory to them. Moreover, Burma was possibly on the brink of a third conflict. Leading *Mandalay-ket-tha* thinkers responded by asking questions about the Kòn-baung state, the proper role of the kingship in that state, and what kinds of reforms were necessary to prevent further European expansion at Burma’s expense.

Mindon's attempts to increase the authority of the throne (chap. 9) came at a time when important *Mandalay-ket-tha* thinkers and leaders were becoming more knowledgeable of constitutional monarchies in Europe (not to mention the French Republic). It is true that they probably did not understand the theories and principles behind European constitutionalism, but they were learning more about its outward manifestations, its organization, perhaps also the responsibility of sovereigns to representative bodies, and certainly that ministers appeared to have more authority relative to the crown than their counterparts in the Kòn-baung court. This, of course, was a matter of identifying form without understanding content, in the same way that nineteenth century Europeans were aware of only the rudiments of Burmese state governance. Nevertheless, even this represented a significant transfer of knowledge, for it raised the possibility, perhaps for the first time, that the authority of the king could be limited. Sufficiently impressed that this broader diffusion of authority at the upper levels of the state was probably one ingredient of European success (and the inverse was one reason for Burma's failures), Gaung, one of Mindon's closest allies and a royal emissary sent twice to Europe, would attempt to pull kingship from this height under the next king, Thibaw.

Reformers and the *Coup d'Etat* of November 1878

The complex court politics that put Thibaw on the throne were partly reflective of the confusion of visions and ideas among *Mandalay-ket-tha* writers, administrators, military men, and other leaders. As Paul J. Bennett once described this period:

Mindon's death precipitated a series of internal power struggles at the court of Mandalay, in which ideological policy differences—traditional nationalism vs. modernization, pro-British vs. anti-British, etc., — played a part subordinate to personal and kinship ties, conflicting quests for power, and perhaps certain traditional lines of division within the official elite. We perceive a group of scholar-officials, some of them noted literary figures, aligned against other officials without any claim to great learning, many of whom had spent the bulk of their careers in military posts or in personal service within the palace.¹

1. Bennett, *Conference under the Tamarind Tree*, 84–85.

While all these forces were indeed at work in dividing and uniting court factions, paramount at the beginning of Thibaw's reign were tensions over the proper role of the kingship in the context of the meeting of Western and old learning. Among those caught up in such tensions were those who variously rejected Western learning entirely, sought to interpret Western learning through the same intellectual frameworks with which the Burmese had incorporated early Indian learning, or attempted to devise new intellectual frameworks through which they would reinterpret the nature and substance of indigenous knowledge.

It is difficult to determine exactly where the court literati who grouped themselves around Gaung stood in this diverse intellectual milieu. Gaung probably found some support among the *binya-daw-thins* who had direct experience in Europe and who now adopted in some contexts European manners. With backgrounds in both Burma and Europe, their later actions demonstrated that, no matter how much they continued to participate in the kind of intellectual pursuits that characterized literati efforts before and during the rise of the Lower Chindwin literati, they were becoming more inclined to reordering Burma on the basis of European administrative and, perhaps, other models. The literati figured prominently in Gaung's vision of a government in Burma. Gaung's ideal state was one that would attempt to emulate (in form) the constitutional monarchies and republics of Europe rather than the hegemonic throne Nyanabhivamsa and others had promoted based on the 'Indian' learning a century earlier. Based on his own personal observances of European-style governments, Gaung developed plans for a fourteen member ministerial cabinet. To run the new government, Gaung planned to bring in the leaders among those literati who were open to the possibilities for change.

Gaung did not have to work hard to win their support. There was a growing worry over the migration of Burmese to Lower Burma and the poor comparisons between the state of Burma's economic prosperity and that of Europe.² According to Tin, the population of Kòn-baung territory dropped from 400,000 households in Mindon's reign to 200,000 households in the reign of Thibaw. These problems were already clear in Mindon's reign, but Mindon's attempts to balance economic reforms and a strengthening of the kingship at the same time meant that he stood in the way of adapting more radical reforms, especially of the government. The realization of Gaung's plans for reform depended on the control of a weak

2. Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 4.205.

heir to Mindon, who was dying of dysentery. Mindon had not named a successor, although there was talk that he had once written down a name in secret and this would be revealed when he had died. Mindon had been reticent to name an heir because of the coup attempt of 1866. To avoid a similar occurrence, Mindon never publicly named another heir.³ This made possible Gaung's manipulation of the succession. Moreover, the commander of his father's old regiment was also serving as governor of the royal capital.⁴

Another clique, quiet for now, but ultimately the real obstacle to Gaung, could be found among the Inner Brigade regimental commanders and the interior ministers of the Privy Council. The commanding officer of one of the Inner Guard regiments was the Taing-dà Wun, Û Hpo. Hpo's family roots were not in the Lower Chindwin, at least not immediately. They were Burmans who settled in Arakan after the Kòn-baung conquest, where they served as township officials. After the annexation of Arakan by the British, Hpo's family resettled in the royal capital where he later moved up the ranks from page to soldier in the Royal Guard. Hpo emerged as the head of a clique of discontents among middle-level ministers and military men, some with close connections, like himself, to the Inner Guard. When Mindon ascended the throne, Hpo's daughters had married into the families of interior ministers, including that of Û Kyein, the Hpaung-wun, who had been an interior guardsman in Mindon's reign and who was presently the Hlei-thin Interior Minister.⁵ As events demonstrated, these men either did not share the views of the reformers and clung to the idea of a strong king, as Mindon had been, or sought further wealth and power by manipulating the situation to their benefit.

One general concern of the elites among the Royal Guard units may have been economic. Teruko Saito has used local records of commercial transactions made during the dynasty as indicators of indebtedness among royal servicemen such as those who filled the ranks of the Royal Guard

3. Ibid., 2.127; Browne, *Reminiscences*, 148; Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, 111. As Browne further explains, if this secret nomination had really taken place, the name could certainly not have been that of Thibaw, as he was then in infancy. Browne, *Reminiscences*, 148.

4. This can be inferred from Tin, *Kòn-baung-hset Maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 3.504.

5. Û Yaw, "Taing-dà-min-gyi," *Myanma-swei-soun-kyan* (Rangoon: Government Press): 5.112-13; *Correspondence Relating to Burmah Since the Accession of King Thibaw in October, 1878* (London: Government of India, 1886), 21; Bennett, *Conference under the Tamarind Tree*, 81; John Nisbet, *Burma Under British Rule—And Before* (London: Archibald Constable, 1901), 1.42, 66; Shway Yoe, *Burman*, 492, 494.

units. Some elites among them, as in the case of the Lower Chindwin families at Lezin, were able to acquire new lands at the expense of debtors among the royal servicemen. The data indicates that after a dramatic rise in debt records in the years immediately after the introduction of the *thathameda* tax, the records decline steadily until the end of Mindon's reign.⁶ One might infer two things from this. First, families with substantial wealth were under threat by shrinking demands for moneylending and thus they encouraged change. It would have been in the best interests of such families to prevent further royal intervention in the local economy. Second, the average soldier would have found himself in a better financial position as the need to borrow money declined. Such men would probably have favored the state fiscal status quo emerging from Mindon's reign and would not have sought radical change. Although the data is not yet available to make either assertion with complete certainty, it does seem reasonable that at the very least, different interests within the army saw changes in the state as relevant to their own personal economy. It is probably the case, however, that they chose not to assert themselves while political changes in the court remained unclear.

Gaung formed an odd alliance with a third force in the court, Mindon's ex-middle queen, the ambitious Hsin-pyu-ma-shin. She also had set her sights on Thibaw as the successor to Mindon. Her main goal was to make one of her daughters the next chief queen. She had earlier provided support to Thibaw's mother, one of Mindon's former queens who, rumor had it, found sexual gratification from other corners than the royal bed. Whether the accusations made by Thibaw's royal challengers that he was really the son, not of Mindon, but of a commoner, Thibaw's mother was banished from the palace. When everyone else turned away from her, the politically astute Hsin-pyu-ma-shin found this destitute woman, the mother of a royal prince who remained in the court, a useful friend. Hsin-pyu-ma-shin had given birth to several daughters, but she had no living sons who would help her maintain influence and privilege in the next reign. The marriage between her daughter, Su-hpayà-lat, and the Thibaw prince was the next best option.

Supported by Hsin-pyu-ma-shin and the Lower Chindwin soldiers of the Inner Brigade (and thus probably with Hpo's acquiescence if not active support), Gaung made his first move as Mindon approached death. The coup leaders had decided upon Thibaw as their nominee to the throne. A

6. Saito, "Rural Monetization and Land-Mortgage Thet-kayits," 157-58.

royal edict, probably produced by Gaung, appeared, nominating Thibaw as Mindon's successor.⁷ Gaung and his co-conspirators had all other possible claimants to the throne put into confinement. Informed of this, Mindon ordered their release, as well as the erection of a tripartite-regency under his favorite and most capable sons. Gaung, however, prevented the orders from being delivered from the Council of Ministers. Gaung seems to have been the man responsible for the rounding up and re-arrest of the princes, as well as some princesses and a queen, before they left the palace grounds.⁸

Gaung and his allies established a council on Mindon's death to run the government. The council required that the king meet with the government, now referred to as the "fourteen departments" or "fourteen ministries" government, as a whole. In Mindon's time, there were three meetings each day. In the morning meeting (*nyi-la-kan*), the Council of Ministers would meet; the afternoon meeting was held in the Privy Council, and in the evening, the ministers would meet with the king for consultation. The reform group changed this structure. Following the example of "European parliaments" (*tho-hsaun-naing-ngan . . . pa-li-man*), sixty-three ministers were divided into the first, second, and third committees (*asi-awei*, literally "conferences"), while the government administration was structured around fourteen European-style departments (*ta-na*), each including over forty additional government officials.⁹ Royal orders were also no longer to be issued independently of the council's consent, and for several months, they bore the notation of the members of the council who had given their approval.¹⁰ One such royal order, the first, provided rewards to ministers and lower level officials alike as compensation for their valuable service during the difficult period of transition from Mindon to Thibaw. The coup leaders apparently intended this as a way to reward supporters and possibly purchase support from their more doubtful peers. For some, salaries were doubled, trebled, and even quadrupled.

7. Browne, *Reminiscences*, 145.

8. Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma*, 1.1, 79; Bennett, *Conference under the Tamarind Tree*, 75.

9. Tin, *Kòn-baung-hset Maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 3.485; Another source relates that there were ten departments. Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 4.208–10; For a full list of the fourteen departments or ministries, see *Kòn-baung-hset Maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 3.485–88.

10. Royal Order 23 November 1878, 10.920; 5 Dec. 1878, 10.922; 6 December 1878, 10.923; 9 December 1878, 10.926; 15 December 1878, 10.927; such edicts continue until the last one bearing this notation, issued on 15 January 1879, Royal Order 10.949.

At the same time, supporters of Hsin-pyu-ma-shin were also granted generous rewards and positions.¹¹

For the three months that the new government survived, Gaung was in charge. He first sought to reduce tensions with the British, Burma's most immediate threat. It was well known that some British officials and merchants, perhaps most of those in Burma, waited anxiously for an opportunity for Britain to annex Upper Burma as it had remained not so much a threat to British Burma as it did a continual inconvenience for trade and natural resource exploitation in Upper Burma and an obstacle to economic connections with Yunnan. Mindon's illness and the expected conflict between royal claimants promised to present such an opportunity. The immediate results of the coup, however, dissuaded such interests as British government officials and traders were pleased with Gaung's initial efforts to placate them. Gaung's Council made tentative trade agreements with the British, reducing trade restrictions, and allowed an armed guard at the British Residency. Hence, as the climate improved, trade increased, and during the November 1878 to February 1879 period, trade surpassed levels for the same months in 1877–1878.¹² The prevention of a probable third Anglo-Burmese war in late 1878 or early 1879 was an important boost to Gaung's creditability as the leading reformer. As Kirkman Finlay, who visited the court in early 1879 observed: "he is...a clever man and it is due to his wisdom and forbearance that the crisis expected at the king's death was so unexpectedly averted. He is quite 'en rapport' with the British Government."¹³

The reform group tried to encourage Thibaw to accept their reforms. Gaung nearly succeeded in persuading him to visit Europe as well, for the same kind of exposure to the world outside of Burma that the reformers had experienced. Presumably, this would also encourage Thibaw to see the wisdom of Gaung's measures. Although Thibaw failed to do so, other leaders within the new government used literature to persuade the king that the measures undertaken were not the introduction of something new, but a reformation of older, textually-based, and correct concepts of the proper role of the throne in its governance of the kingdom. Gaung's chief friend and ally, Pò Hlaing, composed for Thibaw a treatise, the *Raza-damma-*

11. Tin, *Kòn-baung-hset maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 492–93; Royal Order 23 November 1878, 10.198–20.

12. *Correspondence Relating to Burmah Since the Accession of King Thibaw in October, 1878*, 36; Bennett, *Conference under the Tamarind Tree*, 78.

13. Finlay, "Account of a Journey from Rangoon," 34–35.

thingaha-kyàn, which was intended to serve as a guide for what proper rulership should be.¹⁴ Two major themes of the treatise are that (1) the king could not be an undisciplined ruler, at least in practice, for the consequences of the ways in which he ruled would determine the fate of the kingdom and (2) that he had an obligation to choose ministers and other appointees on the basis of their qualities. Foreign countries were naturally inclined to raid and ruin their neighbors and bandits to rob people within their own country. The ministers and soldiers of European countries protected traders, for example, so that there was no danger (*bei-yan*) to their goods and merchants could travel freely. This obligation was not only the case with European states, but was included among the four main rules of rulership (*thingaha*) that had been practiced by Mahasammata and other ancient ancestors of the Kòn-baung kings. Thus, in order for the merchants to trade and farmers to cultivate, they had to be protected by the ministers and the soldiers as well. This required provision by the state of sufficient pay, weapons, and military supplies. In exchange for this protection, merchants and farmers were obligated to provide a tax in cash or in rice, called the *thathameda* tax. The state thus had a moral obligation, referred to as *puri-thameda*, to use the money so collected for the protection of the people, for otherwise it would be stealing.¹⁵

Mindon had initiated the transition from the granting of revenue estates to salaries as the source of remuneration and rewards. Thus, a flow of cash to the throne had become essential for political patronage. We know that Pò Hlaing conflicted with Thibaw shortly into this king's reign because he admonished the king for asking for too much money from the treasury for his personal expenditures.¹⁶ Pò Hlaing stressed in his treatise that the personal resources of the king and the resources of the state should not be considered as the same thing. If either the king or his ministers wished to give money or donations according to their own liking (*alyouk-ba-wa*) then they should use their personal, inherited resources, and not those of the state. Finally, the reformer explained, the state needed a strong army (the *thama-ba-tha* rule) and a king who acted pleasantly (the *ba-sa-beya* rule).¹⁷

Pò Hlaing also attacked the Brahmins and their influence on the

14. Much of this text was incorporated verbatim in separate sections throughout the first volume of Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*.

15. Pò Hlaing, "Raza-damma-thingaha-kyàn," 162–63, 165.

16. Tin, "Introduction," 17; Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 4.25.

17. Pò Hlaing, "Raza-damma-thingaha-kyàn," 163–64.

throne. As discussed in earlier chapters, the importation of Sanskrit texts and the growing importance of Brahman priests and Brahmanic rituals had been an important development intended to strengthen the throne in Bò-daw-hpayà's reign. Mindon had already taken steps to eliminate some standard court rituals. He abolished human sacrifice, for example, in the construction of the royal palace and capital when he built Mandalay in the late 1850s. This practice, known as *myó-sa-dè*, a term derived from the Sanskrit *zandi*, may originally have been a pre-Brahmanic, pre-Buddhist practice, but became associated with, and similarly vocabularized as, other Brahmanic rituals.¹⁸ In early Kòn-baung belief, sacrificed humans, including pregnant women, would become Nats who would serve as sleeping guardians inside the walls and gates under which they were buried and, when awoken by besiegers who tried to break through such structures, they were to wreak havoc among them and wound them before they could enter.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Mindon had left Brahmanic ceremonies and the priests in place as an important part of royal legitimation.

Pò Hlaing now took on these venerable state priests. He explained that Brahmins, who had become important in the reign of the royal ancestor Ukka-raza, had caused deviations from the good rule of the first king of the world, Mahasammata. These "bad" Brahmins wanted the property and wealth of the kingdom and to obtain it they convinced the king that they had secret texts, passed down through the different generations of Brahmin families, which were not for everyone to see. Referring to these texts to support their claims, they persuaded the king to abandon the four *thingaha* rules and put in place the five great sacrificial offerings (*yan-gyi-ngà-bà*). This meant that the Brahmin priests manipulated the spellings of the four rules of kingship, so that they now read differently. *Thathameda*, for example, became *atha-meda*, and they told the king that *atha* meant horse and *meda* to kill; the king was now to order the sacrifice of five horses and in exchange for performing the sacrifice, the king gave donations to the Brahmin priests. *Puri-thameda* now required the sacrifice of a man. The other two rules, as well as another term, *niyaggala*, were simi-

18. Û Thaung Blackmore, "The Founding of the City of Mandalay by King Mindon," *Journal of Oriental Studies* 5 (1959 and 1960): 89. For etymology see *Myan-ma-Ingalei Abhi-dan*, 102.

19. Mindon replaced human victims with large jars of oil in these ritual burials. Thaung Blackmore, "Founding of the City of Mandalay by King Mindon," 89 and 89 n.29.

larly reworked to support the sacrificial function of the priests. As a result, the five sacrificial offerings displaced the four rules of *thingaha*, the limitless wealth of the reigns of such kings as Asoka dwindled, and the number of human diseases increased from three to ninety-eight.²⁰ The message in Pò Hlaing's treatise was clear, the Brahmins and, implicitly, the Bò-daw-hpayà-Nyanabhivamsa formula of Brahmanically sanctified, absolute kingship had to go.

The information on governance provided in Pò Hlaing's *Raza-damma-thingaha-kyàn* also reflected the confidence of the reformers. They were no longer dealing with strong kings such as Bò-daw-hpayà or Mindon, but rather with a very much humbled, or so they believed, throne. Thus, Pò Hlaing felt free to admonish (*hson-ma*) Thibaw, something earlier ministers would not have dared to do.²¹ Even more daring, both Pò Hlaing and Pu Gyi (both interior ministers) annulled (*bei-pyi*) royal orders issued by Thibaw.²²

The Thibaw Restoration of 1879

The reform government was short-lived. After only a few months, problems emerged with those who had other visions of the proper role of kingship in Burmese state and society. Some of these critics were moved by self-interest, but others were apparently sincerely disturbed by the new powers that Gaung and other leading reformers wielded. By the end of January and into early February 1879, these critics succeeded not so much in toppling the new government, because some of its leaders and reforms were retained or were later re-invoked, but rather in reasserting the throne's absolute authority within the state. This amounted to a 'restoration' of royal power and represented as well the continuing competition between the literati and the throne for authority in society.

The major problem with Gaung's reforms was that for almost a century and a half, the Kòn-baung state was centered, at least ideally, on a strong king. Gaung's attempts to limit the king's role in policy-making, to reduce, however slight, his theoretical authority, and to structure a state that more strongly empowered the ministers may have followed a model that worked

20. Pò Hlaing, "Raza-damma-thingaha-kyàn," 166–67.

21. Tin, "Introduction," 17; Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 4.25.

22. Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 4.25.

well in Europe. In Burma, however, there was not the kind of consensus, far from it, among the *Mandalay-ket-thas* that would have provided any kind of popular support for such a move. As one account explains: "The feeling of the people is that the Ministers have been clever in making a puppet . . ." ²³ Even among the ministers in Gaung's government, there may have been doubts. Writing in the twentieth century, Û Tin, a former official of Thibaw's reign, claimed that it was because of this course of action that the Kòn-baung state was ruined. As he explained: "[we] could not follow the ways of Western countries [and we] did not possess the old ways [any longer]." ²⁴ While Gaung still had connections in the Lower Chindwin dominated Inner Brigade, so too did other men, Lower Chindwin men and non-Lower Chindwin men alike. The success of Gaung's plans depended upon the same kind of politics that had always dominated the Kòn-baung court. He, like any other political force at the apex of the Kòn-baung state, needed the support or at least the submission to his authority of other powerful royalty and ministers.

As for royal support, the arrest of the leading princes of Mindon's family and the flight of others meant that Gaung depended in part on the cooperation of Thibaw. Thibaw, however useful his inexperience made him for Gaung's initial machinations, does not appear to have been a good candidate for sustaining reform. As a boy, he was a relatively quiet student in Marks' school and his attendance was poor, only attending the school about twenty times in total. Even so, Thibaw was fond of Marks, which worried Gaung, perhaps because Marks presented a potentially countervailing influence to his own. When Marks prepared to visit Mandalay in 1879 to see his old pupil, Gaung forbade him from doing so in such terms that Marks characterized Gaung's warning as a "threat." According to the Myó-tha assistant minister, Thibaw was devoted to Pali studies and passed the three highest levels of Pali religious examinations. As king, he remained focused on Pali learning and there is no indication that he shared Gaung's appetite for Western knowledge.²⁵ Furthermore, Thibaw

23. Williams to Marks, 24 October 1878, in Marks, *Forty Years in Burma*, 297–99.

24. Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 4.210.

25. I. P. Minayeff, *Travels in and Diaries of India & Burma*, tr. Hirendranath Sanyal (Calcutta: Debi Prasad Mukhopadhyaya, 1959), 131; Marks, *Forty Years in Burma*, 226–27; No. 6. Inscription of 1881 at Nanya-gyi group of monasteries, in *Inscriptions of Pagan, Pinya, and Ava: Translations, With Notes*, ed. and tr. Tun Nyein, 162 (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Press, 1899); Bennett, *Conference under the Tamarind Tree*, 74.

was fearful of easily being replaced by one of his brothers, imprisoned in the palace, at the convenience of the new government. Thus, Thibaw increasingly resented Gaung and the other members of the "Fourteen Ministries."²⁶

In view of royal displeasure, ministerial support proved insufficient and other powerful men and women were able to take advantage of Thibaw's irritation. Among them was Thibaw's influential chief queen, Su-hpayà-lat. While Gaung and his friends attempted to restructure government, Su-hpayà-lat formed an alliance with Hpo, thus unifying the throne and the Inner Brigade in an effort to reverse Gaung's efforts.

The Thibaw Restoration halted, or at least delayed, the unbridled reform efforts of Gaung and his allies in the "Fourteen Department Government." At the end of January, Thibaw, probably encouraged by Su-hpayà-lat, stripped the elderly but bellicose senior 'Ye-nan-kyau' chief minister, Û So, the 'Magwè' chief minister, Pò Hlaing, and the Myo-thit interior minister, Û Aung Ko, of their titles and possessions and had them placed under arrest. Pò Hlaing and Aung Ko were charged with "accepting bribes" and So with "disloyalty" to the throne, "his fall...looked upon [in a similar way] as that of Lucifer."²⁷ Shortly after, the governor of the royal capital, the commander of Gaung's father's old regiment, "became unhealthy and was unable to serve as commander." He resigned from his post and was awarded a substantial sum of money and revenue-producing estates.²⁸ At least one first-hand observer claimed that Gaung remained at "the helm of State almost alone."²⁹ Indeed Gaung played the part of leading minister at royal audiences, but he was also admonished and his authority over the standing army was reduced when he was removed as armaments minister. This was probably a move encouraged by the military men who had helped to restore Thibaw's authority. Instead, Gaung was made the head of the Department of Law (*u-ba-dei ta-na*), which

26. As one observer described the change to Marks: "I am afraid that your [student] is not showing a docile disposition . . . You spoke of the young fellow as determined; that is the goody word for obstinate. He has been playing the fool worse and worse, has begun to speak slightly of the Ministers, and has opened his mouth unequivocally as to the Kalas. The Hpongyis too, don't come off better. He says he knows them!" Marks, *Forty Years in Burma*, 297-98.

27. Finlay, "An Account of a Journey from Rangoon," ff. 34-35.

28. Tin, *Kòn-baung-hset maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 3. 504.

29. Finlay, "An Account of a Journey from Rangoon," 34.

meant that he could still encourage administrative reform.³⁰ Thibaw seems to have retained some gratitude to Gaung for having placed him on the throne and, ironically, continued to depend upon Gaung's counsel after the Restoration that had toppled Gaung's allies.³¹

These demotions and changes were coupled with the promotions of those who had helped to restore royal authority. Hpo, for example, was given the revenues of Pagan-ngei Township and the Hpaung *wun* was appointed as governor of the royal capital. The demotions had been concentrated among the members of the Council of Ministers indicating that the Restoration had involved a split between members of the Council of Ministers and the Privy Council, the latter supported by Inner Brigade commanders. This should not be surprising given that the latter was more intimately connected to the royal household. Indeed, the Privy Council seems to have become the main locus of Restoration activities because of these moves. Appointments made as rewards involved raising supporters primarily to the position of interior ministers and the provision of revenue grants to interior ministers already in place. A reformed Council of Ministers, however, did emerge under the newly appointed chief minister, Hpo.³²

To prevent any further attempts on the throne, the captive princes and princesses were executed *en masse*. They had been moved to new locations and were kept under guard by the commander of the Myauk-da-we Regiment and men of the Shwe-hlan, Myauk-ma-yapin, Bon-daw-pyi and Let-wè-gyaung regiments. According to Burmese sources, on the night of 18 February 1879, three Inner Brigade commanders along with the commanders of the Shwe-let-we Regiment, the Nauk-daw-ba Cavalry, Danek-bala Elephanteers, and the Yun Regiment descended on the prisoners and slaughtered them. This was followed soon after by the murder of the sons of some of the princes as well. It is unclear if Thibaw played a significant role in the murders and he would later claim that he was unaware of what

30. Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 2. 260-61, 4.25; Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma*, 1.1, 90, 1.2, 503; Browne, *Reminiscences*, 157; *Correspondence Relating to Burmah Since the Accession of King Thibaw in October, 1878*, 21. As a result, "the power of the Ministers was much weakened." *Correspondence Relating to Burmah Since the Accession of King Thibaw in October, 1878*, 21.

31. Finlay, "Account of a Journey from Rangoon," 35, 36.

32. Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 2. 261; Tin, *Kòn-baung-hset maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 3. 504, 506, 517.

was happening until after the bloodshed had taken place. Gaung, he claimed, informed him later that the murders were "necessary to prevent a civil war, which would have caused great loss of life."³³

The Restoration was a decisive moment in Kòn-baung history, but its interpretation depends upon differing assessments of internal and external factors. On the one hand, Gaung and the other *Mandalay-ket-tha* reformers had taken a radical approach to changing the Kòn-baung state. It was true that Mindon had engaged in some meaningful reforms, mostly economic and military, but his administrative reforms failed to produce limits on royal authority. Rather the opposite was true. As we have seen, Mindon took significant steps to embellishing royal authority and, continuing the trend supported by Gaung's Lower Chindwin predecessors, strengthening the position of the throne and the position of the king who sat upon it. Gaung's reforms sought to reverse this over-development of royal power or least to modify it in ways that would help Burma to engage in social and economic development following the European model. According to European accounts, there may have been popular support for some limitations on the power of the king in 1885. However, such popular sympathies were not evident in 1878 when Gaung's coup took place.³⁴

Gaung's moves may well have prevented the outbreak of a third Anglo-Burmese war in early 1879. Gaung's amicable approach to the British also inspired some among them to respond favorably. Whatever hopes the reformers had of stemming British expansion, however, their removal from power, with the exception of a humbled Gaung, meant that these reforms would never reach fruition. On the other hand, some external factors may have meant that even had Gaung's government survived, Kòn-baung Burma still would have fallen under British rule. It is unclear if Gaung's reformers could have dealt with the same political crises survived by King Chulalongkorn in Siam, which occurred despite even stronger attempts by the Siamese throne at westernization. However much some

33. Tin, *Kòn-baung-hset maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 3, 506, 509, 510; Geary, *Burma, After the Conquest*, 209–10.

34. Geary, like Minayeff, was sympathetic of the situation of the Burmese at the time of the conquest and felt that generally-prevailing British views that the Burmese wanted British rule were not accurate. As he observed of the general Upper Burmese feelings about the kingship: "There can be no doubt...that opinion has progressed to the extent of recognizing the necessity for curtailing some of the more sublime attributes of the almost divine individual who fills the throne. . . ." Geary, *Burma, After the Conquest*, 297.

British authorities praised Gaung's new government, there were still others who saw Upper Burma as a local threat to the security of British Indian Ocean possessions or had their hopes set on the circumvention of royal monopolies and thus free access to Burmese resources, or even more direct access, through an annexed Burma, to the supposed mineral resources of Yunnan. In the age of high colonialism, Gaung and his fellow reformers might not have been able to prevent British annexation, regardless of the failure or success of the reforms.

The Restoration may have unfettered Thibaw from some of the limitations the Gaung government had placed upon him. Nevertheless, Thibaw remained dependent upon the Lower Chindwin commanders of the Inner Brigade. The importance of these regiments had been underscored after the coup and then in the Restoration, for in both cases regimental commanders were given substantial rewards as well as unprecedented privileges. When Gaung's allies had assumed control, they permitted some Lower Chindwin commanders to use the golden umbrella, formerly reserved for the king. Even the chief clerk of the six Inner Brigade regiments received revenue-producing estates.³⁵ The strongman Hpo was even more ambitious and now had become the most important of the four chief ministers and the power behind the throne, Thibaw might have had fewer formal constraints on his authority, but only for so long as he did not alienate Hpo.

After Gaung and his allies lost control over royal funds, another upsurge in debt contracts occurred among royal servicemen.³⁶ As such contracts can also be read, conversely, as the demonstration of money-lending by elite families, there may be a connection between these developments and the assertion of Hpo and the regimental commanders of their influence in the court. In 1883, Thibaw adopted a more conciliatory approach to Gaung and re-invoked some of reforms ended at the time of the Restoration. On 13 July 1883, Gaung succeeded in persuading the king to redeem some 1,394 debtors at a cost of 40,000 *kyats*.³⁷ This move may have been intended by Gaung to again win support from the average soldier and other royal servicemen to prevent the same kind of adverse reaction his government had received during the Restoration.

Thibaw also began to seek better relations with the British with Gaung's

35. Tin, *Kòn-baung-hset maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*, 494, 496.

36. Saito, "Rural Monetization and Land-Mortgage Thet-kayits," 158.

37. Toe Hla, "Money-lending and Contractual 'Thet-kayits,'" 78.

guidance. When problems emerged with British traders, Gaung suggested that the court should deal gently with the matter, leading Su-hpayà-lat to suggest that Gaung should wear women's clothing. Hpo at first shared her defiant stance towards the British, but made a quick about-face when war actually broke out in 1885. He now shared Gaung's view of the hopelessness of the situation and, whatever his motives, he joined Gaung in attempting to ease the transition from Kòn-baung to British rule. Both men limited access to Thibaw, in the same way that Gaung had limited access to Mindon when the latter was on his deathbed in late 1878, keeping Thibaw in the dark about the lack of Burmese resistance to British forces.³⁸

The final years of the Kòn-baung dynasty raise an important point concerning the changing relationship between the Lower Chindwin literati and the throne. Having very little influence in pre-1782 royal courts, they had confidently, even over-confidently, attempted to strengthen the throne by aiding Bò-daw-hpayà and several of his successors in royal state building efforts concerning royal legitimation, the Religion, and knowledge from the time of Bò-daw-hpayà's accession to the throne. By the late Mindon period, and especially during the reign of Thibaw, we find the literati seeking to bend the court, even control it, in order to remake Burma in order to save it from European conquest.

The Conquest

The end of the Kòn-baung state came in late 1885 with the outbreak of the Third Anglo-Burmese War. British forces succeeded in bringing down the royal capital within weeks. The rumor of the day was that the Burmese king was not aware that a war had even begun until he heard gunfire just outside his palace enclosure. Days later, he was hustled onto a river steamboat, moved to an ocean steamer just offshore, and taken to his exile in India, never to see Burma again. The British forces treated the king mildly, but not his royal city. As I. P. Minayeff, an admittedly sour man who was no friend of the British, explained, the Burmese:

are afraid of going [to the palace]; they fear the British soldiers. The soldiers at first behaved abominably; they were getting drunk and running

38. Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 2. 261; Geary, *Burma, After the Conquest*, 211–12, 215, 218–19, 221; Bennett, *Conference under the Tamarind Tree*, 83–84.

after Burmese girls in the bazaars. A few of them were lounging for hours on the streets. This created a strong and disgusting impression on the minds of the native population... The authorities catch and shoot a few dacoits each day. The bodies of the dacoits shot down are carried through the streets in order to terrorize the population. But the inhabitants look at this exhibition with indifference and the dacoits smoking their cigars go to the gallows with a smile on their lips.³⁹

Local women harassed, young men executed, and disorderly British soldiers, some of whom were busy snapping photographs of executed Burmese,⁴⁰ marked the beginning of a painful colonial era.

Although the capital had fallen easily, resistance began in the provinces that would stave off a complete British conquest for several years. At Mandalay, because of the cooperation of Hpo, the Council of Ministers lingered on for another month or so, useful to the British as a kind of collaborative local government. The efforts of the ministers also reflected the reforms initiated by Gaung. In addition to asking the British for a new king, they asked for a constitution. They also asked the British to bring Gaung back and reinstate him as chief minister.⁴¹

Some among the Burmese general population, however, held Gaung responsible for Thibaw's many real or perceived failings as king, as well as for the British conquest of Burma in 1885, mainly because of Gaung's role in the coup of 1878.⁴² Ironically, just as the reform-minded minister had begun to change Thibaw's perspectives, the British invaded and the state collapsed. This factor makes determining the merits of the reforms and of Gaung himself difficult. One might accept the views of some of Gaung's contemporaries, who claimed that his activities indirectly paved the way for both the alleged excesses of Thibaw's reign and for the British annexation by putting Thibaw on the throne and supporting him even after the 1879 counter-coup. On the other hand, Gaung is equally credited with preventing the outbreak of such a war in 1878/1879 because of his reforms and his friendlier approach to the British.

By viewing Burma as something independent of the throne or of the state, Gaung and his friends were saying something very important about

39. Minayeff, *Travels in and Diaries of India & Burma*, 138.

40. *Ibid.*, 173.

41. Geary, *Burma, After the Conquest*, 219, 220–21, 226, 227.

42. Furnivall, "Manu in Burma," 352.

the ways in which Kòn-baung literati had changed. There had occurred a fundamental shift in thinking about the nature of the Kòn-baung polity. No longer simply a kingdom, Burma was a social, cultural, and religious collective that had needs and concerns that were different from and sometimes contrary to those of the crown. Unlike the king, the palace, or the royal library, the leaders among the reform-minded *Mandalay-ket-thas* remained more or less in place as luminaries of the period. It was their approach to Western learning that made their transition from Kòn-baung to British rule so easy for them (not for other Burmese, of course). For one thing, their willingness to adapt Western learning to precolonial Burma made easier their adaptation to a Burma under European rule. For another, it was their activities under Thibaw that made them in British eyes the one group of educated men among the Burmese who might be useful collaborators. They were correct to a certain extent, but these assumptions misunderstood the role these men intended to play in balancing both "old" learning and Western learning, even after the Kòn-baung state had fallen.

Reform-minded *Mandalay-ket-tha* thus found their transition to the new era, the *koloni-ket* (colonial period), easier than did others. Throughout Upper Burma, a host of princes, pretenders, outright bandits, and others resisted British rule for years. They clung to the old political models, frequently taking on the rudiments and title of kingship in their relatively small and fluid domains. Unable to come to grips with the new order of things, they had no choice but to fight the British invaders. Ironically, as mentioned above, it was not they who preserved the legacy of the old learning, but the very reformers who had sought to remake Burma along European lines. The state was certainly conquered, but the literati who worked so hard to strengthen that state now attempted to preserve what remained. Tin, the Pagan assistant minister of the fallen court, moved quickly after the looting of the palace to remove what remained of the royal records and manuscripts and then deposit them in the British Chief Secretary's Office in Rangoon (formerly Yangon). At the suggestion of the British governor and after years of hard work, he put together a compendium of knowledge on Burmese administration, published in five volumes from 1931 to 1933 as the *Administrative Precedents of the Burman Rulers*.

After the British conquest, many of the Upper Burmese *Mandalay-ket-tha* literati joined a new colonial elite emerging in Lower Burma, thus shifting their labors from the fallen Burmese court to the new rulers of

Burma. Gaung, Pò Hlaing, and a number of the other court literati with backgrounds in European learning were no longer in commanding positions in the state, but they still served as moderators between Europe and Burma. Employed by the colonial government, they acted as advisors. After the British took Mandalay, Gaung was appointed as the adviser "on local matters" to the new provisional government that was initially set up in the fallen capital.⁴³ He was useful to British administrators as he was not only a willing collaborator, but, as a former chief minister, he also possessed substantial knowledge of Burmese governance and law. At the request of the Judicial Commissioner of Upper Burma, Gaung later compiled his knowledge of Burmese laws into the *Digest of the Burmese Buddhist Law* (1899).⁴⁴ Gaung also served as a prominent member of the Lieutenant Governor's Legislative Council. The employment of the Kòn-baung literati marked the beginning of what proved to be a long-term collaboration as their sons and grandsons likewise joined the colonial regime by taking up administrative and legislative posts, serving as township officers, assistant commissioners, non-commissioned officers in the mounted police, archaeological survey officers, barristers, and judges in the colonial government.⁴⁵

43. Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma*, 1.2.503–504; Stewart, *Buddhism in Burma*, 11.

44. Furnivall, "Manu in Burma," 352.

45. Langham-Carter, "The Kinwun Mingyi at Home," 125, 127–28; idem, "Maha Bandalat at Home," 126; idem, "Burmese Rule on the Toungoo Frontier," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 27.1 (1937): 22–23.

Epilogue and Conclusion

The patrimonial Burmese state fell in a matter of weeks in 1885, a little over a century after the throne and a clique of literati set out to create a new Burma. The king was whisked away quietly enough into exile in British India and a colonial administration was gradually arranged in the context of continuing hostilities in outlying areas. What horrified Burmese literati of the time, however, was the sack of the royal archives. This occurred when Burmese royal servants and indigenous auxiliaries from Lower Burma who served in the colonial army joined British soldiers in the pillage of the state records. As Tin, a witness to the events, remembered in his *Administrative Precedents of the Burman Rulers*:

The [only state records] that survived were those that were not burned or looted by the English army and Burman labourers . . . The burning and the looting lasted for seven days . . . The records, parabaiks and so on . . . had been piled up on the ground and then were burned. Seeing this, the labourers who watched the burning taking place carefully [removed records] from the fire and carried them away. Nothing could stop them. They took what they wanted. The burning occurred in this way . . . the English soldiers and officers, etc., and Burmese who were serving in the English army opened up all of the chests [of records], searching them. In some they found valuable items . . . Because they opened and searched the chests in the hopes of finding such things, they ripped apart the bark [pages]. When they ripped the bark apart, they tossed them aside. When they tossed them aside, the rubbish collectors gathered them and set fire to them.¹

1. Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 5.106–8.

Although British authorities put a stop to the burning and the looting after about a week, and some expressed regret over these disgraceful events, the dissection of the textual foundations of the Kòn-baung state continued.² The British war prize committee divided the royal library, or what remained of it, into three parts sent to Rangoon, London, and Bangkok. This almost ritualistic destruction of the written basis of the state allowed, or forced, British colonial authorities to re-map administrative relationships between local elites and the state in Upper Burma in order to assert their administrative hegemony over Burma as a whole.

Efforts to gather and preserve Burma's histories, law books, grammars, and the Burmese traditions codified in them, continued for decades. These efforts began when Tin himself ran to the looted palace and hauled away thirty-five cartloads of palm leaf and bark manuscripts that he then deposited in a colonial office in Rangoon. Other prominent literati of his time and after expended considerable effort into putting Burmese manuscripts into print in the vernacular. The main Kòn-baung chronicles were also incorporated into historical texts that sought to bring Burmese history up to the close of the pre-colonial era.

In the colonial-era discourse of both the British and the Burmese, the latter being of that small group associated with colonial administration and schools, Burma was viewed as going through a transition, between the two most important phases of its history, from a 'traditional' pre-colonial past to a 'modernizing' (even "civilizing") colonial present. Tin, however, had grown up in a different context, that of the later years of the Burmese court, before the colonial annexation. This may be why his view of "traditional" Burma was a progressive one, in which ideas and institutions evolved over time, rather than existing in impermeable form in a timeless space, towards an idealized future. Ideas about Burmese (Burman) ethnicity, religion, the state and its responsibilities, the legitimacy of the throne, the role of the monastic order, and nearly everything else assumed to be static and uniform, had been repeatedly contested throughout broad sweeps of Burmese history.

This book began with a small monastic community living on one fron-

2. Apparently, the sack of the royal records was only cut short by Burmese intervention. As Û Tin explains: "Aware of what was happening, the Taung-gwin minister sent the chief clerk, Û Myè, to the minister [commissioner] Sladen to discuss [the possibility] of orders being issued to stop the burning of the records and to stop spectators from carrying them away." Tin, *Myan-ma-min Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*, 5.107; Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma*, 1.2, 492.

tier of Kòn-baung Burma. The monks who led it and the lay literati who followed them, because of monastic competition and several unique political opportunities, were able to significantly transform some of the key intellectual underpinnings of Kòn-baung state and society. Their work strengthened the throne and, by writing its history, helped to give the state an abstract form that it would otherwise not have had. There were tensions too between the Lower Chindwin monastic and lay literati and the throne. As we have seen, the throne sometimes pushed for more authority in more areas than these literati were willing to concede. The impact of European information and the stronger role played by other literati in the royal court diluted the Lower Chindwin influence. However, it did not extinguish it completely. Kòn-baung political evolution from Bò-daw-hpayà's reign left Lower Chindwin men in a strong position as they dominated the standing army of the court. Having left the standard histories of both the state and the Religion, the Lower Chindwin legacy also continued to influence both the state and society. Moreover, the Lower Chindwin literati were changing too along with Kòn-baung society. Ultimately, one of their number, bridging the old learning and the new Western learning, attempted to change the throne to produce a state that better served the interests of Burmese survival. This last effort failed to save the state, but it did help to preserve Lower Chindwin intellectual contributions, the handprints of frontier literati, to mainstream Burmese culture.

One possible criticism of the methodology in this book would probably be that the focus has been on a relatively small group of monks and lay literati among a much broader field of writing and scholars. This is true. Kòn-baung Burmese society was literate, more literate than perhaps in any other period in its history, possibly more literate than any other society in pre-colonial Southeast Asia, but certainly more literate than early nineteenth century Europe. Subjects of the Kòn-baung Empire, from the lowest wrung of society up to the court were thinking, reading, and writing. Nevertheless, this criticism hints at the real strength of this book's argument. Despite the incredible range of views on everything from history, to politics, to religion, and so on, it was the ideas and texts of the Lower Chindwin literati that set the standards of pre-colonial or 'traditional' Burma. As a result, the reforms made by Lower Chindwin men from the 1780s, and their vision of what Burma should be, survived the conquests through the texts they left behind. Now, into the twenty-first century, these texts remain the ultimate authority for information on Burma's past. The question of why such a small group of monastic and lay literati should

be so important, in a large empire with literati in every corner, has been the basis of this book.

The cultivation by Nyanabhivamsa's textual community of strict adherence to the monastic code and their emphasis on textual authority allowed these Lower Chindwin monks and associated lay literati to make their case for supreme textual authority in the kingdom one that few, even the Kòn-baung kings, could resist. Nevertheless, luck played a role as well. Bò-daw-hpayà's assumption of the throne opened the door for their rise to the top of Burmese monasticism and society. Although insufficient information is available to understand completely Bò-daw-hpayà's personality, the author's reading of this enigmatic ruler is that his daily experiences among these men, probably mediated for much of his pre-regnal days by the influential Tun Nyo, inspired a similar personal ambition to isolate authority regarding interpretation of the Religion, history, and culture and to control it through texts. Certainly, Bò-daw-hpayà was the most innovative ruler of the entire dynasty and his lengthy reign was no doubt due in part to the support of his Lower Chindwin literati.

Also important was what might be termed the soul or the spirit of the dynasty. The Kòn-baung rulers rose because of a unique set of circumstances, just as had the Lower Chindwin literati. They had no local dynasty to unseat, Lower Burmese rebels did that for them and put up a fairly mediocre attempt to hold on to Upper Burma in the face of Alaung-hpayà's armies. However, with this 'lucky start' came a sense of insecurity that pervaded the entire dynasty. The early Kòn-baung rulers were not scholarly men but hearty warriors, like Pyu-zàw-hti, as well as peasants with only a fictive lineage invented later connecting them to royal ancestors. The Kòn-baung dynasty spent much of its life trying to offset these initial weaknesses through histories and treatises, Brahmanic rituals, religious purification, and even westernization. The Lower Chindwin literati fed off of these weaknesses, always providing new solutions when weaknesses came to a head. This piece-meal approach to creating royal legitimacy left a state that was always lopsided and seemingly, in royal minds, always teetering on the verge of collapse. The Kòn-baung state's thirst for knowledge gradually affected all dimensions of Burmese society as it was remolded to support the throne. Ultimately, under Mindon, the kingship reached its highest level, in fact or fiction, of authority. Gaung's attempt to change the nature of Kòn-baung ruler-ship paved the way for its final collapse in 1885. Perhaps with greater irony, it was the legacy of the Lower Chindwin literati that survived and the Kòn-baung state that did not.

At the core of this analysis has been one interpretation of the meaning of the early modern Burmese state. This book has attempted to demonstrate that the state was not equivalent with the throne, but instead a collective of different groups and institutions that pursued their own agendas, sometimes in unison, but sometimes at odds with each other. While firearms, administrative structures, the royal family, central monastic organization, and the like were more visible to the Burmese and to the historians who have written about them, other forces no less significant to the state contributed to, tested, and challenged, both covertly and overtly, the social, cultural, religious, and political foundations of the state.

In order for the state to function effectively as a political entity, it needed more than state machinery. Soldiers could not garrison every spot on the map, the state could not afford to assert its authority directly over every individual on an everyday basis, and it lacked the sophisticated technology of contemporary states, which are still not able to achieve absolute control. The creation of the absolute state and the throne as the all-powerful political, cultural, and religious centre it claimed to be was not the turf of soldiers, ministers, and other functionaries *per se*. Rather, it was the playing field of the creative minds of learned men (and women) who could manipulate the chief medium of popular expression and information, that is, texts, in an age of growing popular literacy. Some of these literati were soldiers, ministers, and so on, but we can only understand how they worked in continually remaking the state by focusing on them as a social force separate from the throne as an institution. Again, in the case of some kings who sat on it, such as Bò-daw-hpayà, their efforts can only be understood by viewing them within a literati as well as a royal framework.

Just as the meaning of the state remains disputed, so too do issues regarding external influence. One might question, for example, the significance of 1885, when Thibaw laid his eyes for the last time on Burma. This year saw the realization of two heavily intertwined agendas, the extension of European rule to the politically unsophisticated and the extension of the European "gift" of knowledge and learning to the ignorant. Ideologies developing since the late eighteenth century among Europeans connected technological advance with presumed superiority over non-Europeans, thus granting legitimacy to European expansion.³ Burmese literati in royal officialdom had developed alternative ideologies, as promoted by Pò Hlaing, which disconnected Europeans from their learning. European

3. Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

advancement in government and science were not fundamentally European *per se*. Rather they were derived from universal truths that Burma, because of the Indian learning encouraged by the Brahmans and Lower Chindwin literati, already had. European learning was thus, simply put, learnable through existing indigenous intellectual frameworks. Pre-conquest Europeans failed to understand these indigenous efforts. As Finlay observed in 1879: "What the King and his ministers want is education to lift them out of the mire of ignorance and superstition which is at present blinding them."⁴ Moreover, even those literati most interested in borrowing European institutions, such as Gaung, did so to prevent European rule, not to invite it, however well they may have adapted to British rule once it was begun.

Burmese resistance to British rule in Upper Burma was notoriously long-lived and one scholar has argued that a "pacified Burma" may not have existed at all, for there was a continuum of resistance up through to the end of the colonial period, although he admits that continued military resistance only lasted about a dozen years.⁵ Upper Burmese, more distant from the colonial capital of Rangoon than their Lower Burmese counterparts, remained critical of the colonial government for failing to maintain the court's role in preserving Burmese values. As one anonymous observer chided in 1896, in this case on the issue of Burmese girls kidnapped in Rangoon and Mandalay:

Upper Burmans associate British rule with the loss of respect for female virtue. They say that the British Government is strong enough to bring murderers to justice, to suppress rebellion or organized crime, but is utterly helpless in putting a stop to the kidnapping of girls... The Burmans are a long suffering race, their wails and woes seldom reach the English newspapers; and all that they beg from the great, powerful and benign British Government is the protection of their wives and daughters against unscrupulous individuals who attempt to insult their modesty and wreck their virtue.⁶

Such views reflected the continuity of Burmese ideas of the proper role of rulership. Something that is usually forgotten about the colonial period in Burma was that it was remarkably short, especially when we consider the

4. Finlay, "An Account of a Journey from Rangoon," 51–52.

5. Michael Aung-Thwin, "The British 'Pacification' of Burma: Order without Meaning," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 16 (1985): 247.

6. *Rangoon Gazette Weekly Budget*, 28 August 1896, 9.

life experiences of the socially important elders of society. The eighteen-year-olds in Upper Burma at the end of Thibaw's reign, for example, would have been in their sixties when *hsaya* San was put on trial in the early 1930s and seventy when Burma was given a constitution allowing for limited self-government. For those who lived so long, in their mid-seventies they would have witnessed the Japanese march into Burma that destroyed the image of European superiority and effectively ended "permanent" colonial rule.⁷ For this generation, and their children and grandchildren, independent Burma and the intellectual, historical, religious, and other tangible and abstract developments examined in the present volume were living memories that helped frame their thinking, their interpretations of British rule, and their views of the world. This heritage was significant, for by comparison, British rule in Upper Burma was less than half as long as that of the Kòn-baung court (sixty-three years, 1885–1947, as opposed to 133 years, 1752–1885). In the long-term view of Burmese history, the colonial period was somewhat of a "temporary success," however severe its consequences.

In *The Making of Modern Burma*, Thant Myint-U presents a provocative thesis on nineteenth century Burma that adopts a "colonial change" approach. His main argument is that modern Burma was a construction of the earlier years of British rule. He looks at the evolution of Kòn-baung social, political, and economic institutions as complexes of meaning and the directions in which they were headed, rather than focusing only on those elements that fed into later, post-colonial developments. These institutions reached a somewhat dead end at the end of the nineteenth century. Replacing them with new institutions, colonial rule transformed Burmese society and modern Burma has drawn from these transformations, not those developments that characterized the Kòn-baung period. As Thant explains:

With the exception of the Sangha, one is hard pressed to identify any supra-local institutions which carried over from the pre-colonial through colonial times, and even the Sangha, stripped of its role as educator as well as of royal supervision, underwent a profound transfor-

7. Although the British did return in 1945–1947, for much of this time, neither Burmese nor British, considered it more than a temporary occupation on the road to a formal grant of independence. Moreover, steps toward self-rule had already gone far in the 1937–1942 period.

mation. Unlike Thailand, no older institutions, such as the monarchy, carried over to ballast newer forces in society.⁸

Thus, as Thant argues, colonial schools and not monasteries educated Burma's political leaders. Local administration amounted to a transplantation of Indian colonial structures to Burma. The colonial rulers shed the Burmese economy of Kòn-baung political controls and rationalized it along Western lines. A new system of taxation that the British erroneously believed they inherited from pre-colonial Burma replaced *Thathameda* taxation. Tenants won control over the land from "members of old ruling lineages." Treaties and European surveyors created Burmese borders that had been fluid and undefined in Kòn-baung Burma. Colonial surveys transformed a culturally and ethnically heterogeneous indigenous population into a single category of "Burman Buddhists." Finally, Kòn-baung aristocratic life vanished. As Thant further explains, "the primary cleavage in the new Burma [being] not ... one of class but of ethnicity, between those seen as 'foreign' [Chinese, Indians, and Europeans] and those seen as 'native' and between the 'native races' themselves."⁹ One institution of Kòn-baung society, however, the monastic order and its influential role among the general Burmese population, remained.

The fundamental contributions of the Kòn-baung monastic and lay literati to the Burmese state and society that have been examined in this book also continued to be important in the colonial period. Among these, there were several key developments. Lower Chindwin literati established the state historical narrative that would remain the standard reference for pre-colonial history to the present. While other literati produced histories, no other Kòn-baung era histories have reached the same level of scholarly and popular reliance as Tun Nyo's *Great New Chronicle*, the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, the *Treatise on the Religion*, and the *Lineage of the Religion*. Although they geared their agenda towards the state, their legacy was a history of the Burmese nation, as it evolved beyond the Kòn-baung years, through the colonial period, and into the era of independence. As a result, the eighteenth and nineteenth century heroes of colonial-era Burmese, at least by the measure of topics of the popular literature of the time, were not Lower Burmese or Western Burmese but the Upper Burmese such as

8. Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma*, 254, 255.

9. *Ibid.*, 243.

Alaung-hpayà, Bò-daw-hpayà, and Maha Bandula. Significantly, the Burmese derived no significant national heroes from among those who had lived under British rule in Arakan, Tenasserim, and Pegu before 1885. The Burma Research Society, founded by both Burmese scholars and sympathetic Europeans, began to publish a long series of classical literature in inexpensive pamphlets for wide circulation. At the same time, other publishers produced numerous editions of the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, *Treasured Precedents*, *Treatise on the Religion*, Gaung's *Diaries*, and a host of other works in Burmese, not in English, nor in the non-Burmese vernaculars. As was also reflected in the popular literature of the early twentieth century, Burmese may have been living in the colonial-era, but their minds dwelled on the independent past as constructed by the Lower Chindwin literati.

It could also be suggested that the Lower Chindwin literati push to engage in politics and change society, directed by Nyanabhivamsa and Tun Nyo to strengthen the Kòn-baung court and Gaung to tame it, encouraged a role for the educated as social and political leaders that was taken up by Burmese students coming out of colonial schools and the university, as was the Lower Chindwin approach to borrowing foreign ideas and texts to provide models for these efforts. Colonial education certainly afforded their access to Western democratic ideals and to socialism. The legacy of the Lower Chindwin literati, who had tried so many times to use what they had learned to change state and society certainly provided precedents and models for the eagerness we find in the Thakins to apply the new learning of their time to Burmese politics.

All of this comes down to the importance of the interplay of literati, the throne, and society. Nyanabhivamsa and others cooperated with the state in similar efforts to "traditionalize" the Burma of their own time. The creation of the state historical narrative, the promotion of their views on religious orthodoxy, the rationalization of ethnicity, and the development of state legitimization myths all involved the creation of something new that was linked to older traditions and texts. While such literati may have genuinely believed that they had 'gotten to the truth,' the author's understanding of colonial-era Burmese thinkers is that they were no less convinced of the authenticity of their claims. The demonstration of these claims included significant opposition from Burmese with alternative views. Such efforts sometimes included the revision of texts potentially useful to opponent's claims.¹⁰ As with the debate over old and Western

10. One example is the republication of Shin Sanda-mala-lin-ga-ya, *Yakhine-ya-zawin-thit-gyàn* (Mandalay: Hanthawaddy Press, 1931). This history includes a particularly

learning in the nineteenth century, colonial-era intellectual contests were limited to elites competing for control of society, with little active participation in the debate by the majority of the general population. And, as with the more ambitious among the literati and the Kòn-baung court in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, new generations of Burmese, perhaps encouraged by the political disenfranchisement brought by the new colonial order, sought to bring the intellectual manifestations of society under their own control. Certainly, when the future Bò-daw-hpayà first met Tun Nyo nearly two and a half centuries ago, he could not have imagined the dramatic intellectual transformations that they and Nyanabhivamsa would soon initiate.

negative assessment of Burman treatment of an ethnic minority, in this case the Arakanese, during the Kòn-baung conquest and rule from 1784 until 1826. This chapter lends weight to contemporary criticisms of the Burmese state's treatment of ethnic peoples elsewhere. As a result of censorship, the current edition does not include this chapter.

Bibliography

- Adas, Michael. *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- Allott, Anna J. "Continuity and Change in the Burmese Literary Canon." In *The Canon in Southeast Asian Literatures*, ed. David Smyth, 21–40. London: Curzon, 2002.
- . "The Study of Burmese Literature—A General Survey." In *Southeast Asian Languages and Literatures*, ed. E. Ulrich Kratch, 7–56. London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. London: Verso, 1991.
- Aung-Thwin, Michael. "The British 'Pacification' of Burma: Order without Meaning." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 16 (1985): 245–62.
- . *The Mists of Ramañña: The Legend That Was Lower Burma*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005.
- . *Myth & History in the Historiography of Early Burma: Paradigms, Primary Sources, and Prejudices*. Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1998.
- . "The Myth of the 'Three Shan Brothers' and the Ava Period in Burmese History." *Journal of Asian Studies* 55.4 (1996): 881–901.
- . *Pagan: The Origins of Modern Burma*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985.
- Ba, Vivian. "The Burmese Embassy to Italy in 1872." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 53.2 (1970): 65–76.
- Bagshawe, L. E. Preface to *The Maniyadanabon of Shin Sandalinka*, viii–xii. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, Southeast Asia Program, 1981.
- . "Translator's Preface." In *Rajadhammasangaha*, tr. L. E. Bagshawe, 5–8. Burma/Myanmar Online Library, 2004.
- Ba Han. "The Evolution of Burmese Dramatic Performances and Festival Occasions." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 49.1 (1966): 1–18.
- Baird, J. G. A., ed. *Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie*. Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1910.
- Baptist Board of Foreign Missions. "Efficiency of the Press in Burmah," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 19.3 (March 1839).
- . "Missions in Asia." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 15.6 (June 1835), 236–48.
- . "Report of the Board for the Year Ending April 24, 1833." *American Baptist Magazine* 13.6 (June 1833).

- . "Report of the Board of Managers, for the Year Ending April 29, 1829." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* (June 1829).
- . "A Tabular View of the Missions of the American Baptist Board, for January 1, 1835." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 15.1 (January 1835).
- Ba Thaung. *Sa-hso-daw-mya Addubbatti*. Yangon: Zwei-sabei-yeib-myou, 1971.
- Ba Thein. "A Dictionary of Burmese Authors." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 10.3 (1920): 120–54.
- Bayfield, G. T. "Narrative of a Journey from Ava to the Frontiers of Assam, and Back, Performed between December 1836 and May 1837, under the Orders of Lieutenant-Colonel Burney, Resident at Ava." In *Selection of Papers Regarding the Hill Tracts Between Assam and Burmah and on the Upper Brahmaputra*, 134–244. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1873.
- Bayly, C. A. *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- . "State Building in the Shadow of Imperialism: Burma and Maharashtra in the Eighteenth Century." Paper presented at the ICAS Conference, Noordwijkerhout, the Netherlands, June 1998.
- Becker, Alton L. *Writing on the Tongue*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1989.
- Bengal Political Consultations*. Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library. London.
- Bennett, Cephas. "Letter from Mr. [Cephas] Bennett to Dr. L. Bolles, dated Rangoon, 30 May 1833." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.4 (April 1834).
- . "Mr. Bennett's Journal." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.5 (May 1834); 14.9 (September 1834); 14.10 (October, 1834); 15.3 (March 1835).
- Bennett, Paul J. *Conference under the Tamarind Tree: Three Essays in Burmese History*. New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1971.
- Bigandet, Paul Ambroise. *The Life or Legend of Gaudama. The Buddha of the Burmese. With Annotations. The Ways to Neibban, and Notice on the Phonygies or Burmese Monks*. 2 vols. Delhi: Bharatiya Publishing, 1879.
- . *An Outline of the History of the Catholic Burmese Mission from the Year 1720 to 1887*. Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1887.
- Binns, B. O. *Burma Gazetteer: Amherst District*. Vol. A. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1934.
- Blackburn, Anne M. *Buddhist Learning and Textual Practice in Eighteenth-Century Lankan Monastic Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- . "Localizing Lineage: Importing Higher Ordination in Theravādin South and Southeast Asia." In *Constituting Communities: Theravāda Buddhism and the Religious Cultures of South and Southeast Asia*, ed. John Clifford Holt, Jacob N. Kinard, and Jonathan S. Walters, 131–49. New York: State University of New York Press, 2003).
- Bode, Mabel Haynes. *The Pali Literature of Burma*. London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1909.
- Brown, Nathan. "Letter from Nathan Brown to Dr. L. Bolles, dated Maulmain 21 November 1833." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.10 (October 1834).
- Browne, Horace A. *Reminiscences of the Court at Mandalay: Extracts from the Diary of General Horace A. Browne, 1859–1879*. Woking: Oriental Institute, 1907.

- Burney, Henry. "Discovery of Buddhist Images with Deva-nagari Inscriptions at Tagaoung, the Ancient Capital of the Burmese Empire." *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengals* (March 1836): 157–64.
- . *The Journal of Henry Burney in the Capital of Burma 1830–1832*. With an Introduction by Nicholas Tarling. Auckland: University of Auckland, 1995.
- Butt, John W. "Thai Kingship and Religious Reform (18th–19th Centuries)." In *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos, and Burma* ed. Bardwell L. Smith, 34–51. Chambersburg, Anima Books, 1978.
- Cady, John F. A *History of Modern Burma*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958.
- Charney, Michael W. "Beyond State-centered Histories in Western Burma, Missionizing Monks and Intra-Regional Migrants in the Arakan Littoral, c. 1784–1860." In *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200–1800*, ed. Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider, 213–24. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002.
- . "Centralizing Historical Tradition in Precolonial Burma: The Abhiraja/Dhara-rajara Myth in Early Kōn-baung Historical Texts." *South East Asia Research* 10.2 (2002): 185–215.
- . "A Reinvestigation of Konbaung-Era Burman Historiography on the Beginnings of the Relationship Between Arakan and Ava (Upper Burma)." *Journal of Asian History* 34.1 (2000): 53–68.
- . *Southeast Asian Warfare, 1300–1900*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- . "Where Jambudipa and Islamdom Converged: Religious Change and the Emergence of Buddhist Communalism in Early Modern Arakan (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)." PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1999.
- Cole, J. R. I. *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722–1859*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
- Collins, Steven, and Andrew Huxley. "The Post-Canonical Adventures of Mahasammata." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 24 (1996): 623–48.
- "Color Printing in the Nineteenth Century: Lithography." <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/color/lithogr.htm>
- Cooke, Nola. "The Myth of the Restoration: Dan-trong Influences in the Spiritual Life of the Early Nguyen Dynasty (1802–47)." In *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea, 1750–1900*, ed. Anthony Reid, 269–95. Houndmills: MacMillan Press, 1997.
- Correspondence Relating to Burmah Since the Accession of King Thibaw in October, 1878*. London: Government of India, 1886.
- Cox, Hiram. *Journal of a Residence in the Burmhan Empire and More Particularly at the Court of Amarapoora*. London: John Warren, 1821.
- Crawford, John. *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in the Year 1827*. London: Henry Colburn, 1829.
- Crook, Nigel, ed. *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia: Essays on Education, Religion, History, and Politics*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Cummings, William. *Making Blood White: Historical Transformations in Early Modern Makassar*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002.
- Cutter, Otis T. "Letter from Otis T. Cutter to L. Bolles, Dated Maulmain 6 September 1833." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.9 (September 1834).

- . "Letter from Otis T. Cutter to L. Bolles, Dated 14 November 1833." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.9 (September 1834).
- Dalrymple, Alexander. *Oriental Repertory*. 2 vols. London: William Ballintine, 1808.
- Desai, W. S. "Events at the Court and Capital of Ava During the First Anglo-Burmese War." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 27 (1937): 1–14.
- . History of the Burma Indemnity (1826–1833)." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 24.3 (1934): 149–59.
- . "A Map of Burma (1795) by a Burmese Slave." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 26.3 (1936): 147–52.
- Duroiselle, Charles. *Guide to the Mandalay Palace*. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1925.
- . *Pageant of King Mindon Leaving His Palace on a Visit to the Kyauktawgyi Buddha Image at Mandalay* (1865). Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1925.
- Dutiya-maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi. Mandalay: n.p., 1919.
- Dyson, James, and Robert Uhlig, comp. *Great Inventions*. London: Robinson, 2001.
- "Early Newspapers in Burma." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 27.3 (1937): 277–82.
- Esche, Annemarie. "Myanmar Prose Writing: Tradition and Innovation in the Twentieth Century." In *The Canon in Southeast Asian Literatures*, ed. David Smyth, 8–20. London: Curzon, 2002.
- Ferguson, John P. "The Quest for Legitimation by Burmese Monks and Kings: The Case of the Shwegyin Sect (19th–20th Centuries)." In *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos, and Burma*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith, 66–86. Chambersburg: Anima Books, 1978.
- . "The Symbolic Dimensions of the Sangha." PhD diss., Cornell University, 1975.
- Finlay, Kirkman. "An Account of a Journey from Rangoon by Train and Steamer to Mandalay Which Took Place between 21 January and 14 February 1879." MS 380016, AMs, 21 February 1879. School of Oriental and African Studies, Special Collections, London.
- Florida, Nancy K. *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future: History as Prophecy in Colonial Java*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.
- Foley, William. "Journal of a Tour through the Island of Rambree, with a Geological Sketch of the Country and Brief Account of the Customs, & of Its Inhabitants." *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 5 (1835): 20–39, 82–95, 199–207.
- Fonseca, Fr. Manoel da. "Father Manoel da Fonseca, S. J., in Ava (Burma) (1613–1652)." *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, n.s., 21 (1925): 27–48.
- Forchhammer, E. *The Jardine Prize: An Essay on the Sources and Developments of Burmese Law*. Rangoon: Government Press, 1885.
- Frenchman, E. P. "Prisons." In *Twentieth Century Impressions of Burma. Its history, People, Commerce, Industries, and Resources*, ed. Arnold Wright, 254–57. London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing, 1910.
- Furnivall, J. S. *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948.
- . "The Coronation of Burmese Kings." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 15.1 (1925): 142–43.

- . "Ludu Tekkatho." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 36.1 (1953): 60–76.
- . "Manu in Burma: Some Burmese Dhammathats." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 30.2 (1940): 351–70.
- Furnivall, J. S., and Pe Maung Tin, eds.. *Zam-bú-di-pá ok-hsaung-kyàn*. Rangoon: Burma Research Society, 1960.
- Fytche, Albert. *Burma Past and Present with Personal Reminiscences of the Country*. 2 vols. London: C. Kegan Paul, 1878.
- . "Narrative of the Mission to Mandalay in 1867." In *Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Foreign Department*. No. 63, 1–32. Calcutta: Foreign Department Press, 1868.
- Geary, Grattan. *Burma, After the Conquest, Viewed in Its Political, Social, and Commercial Aspects, From Mandalay*. London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle, and Revington, 1886.
- Goody, Jack, ed. *Literacy in Traditional Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Gordon, Robert. "Revised Copy of Diary of Mr. Robert Gordon, Civil Engineer, on Special Duty on an Expedition from Burmah to Talifoo." *British Parliamentary Papers*. Vol. 41. *Western China*. Shannon: Irish University Press, 1971.
- Gouger, Henry. *Personal Narrative of Two Years' Imprisonment in Burmah*. London: John Murray, 1860.
- Government of India. *Report on the Census of British Burma Taken in August 1872*. Rangoon: Government Press, 1875.
- . *Report on the Census of Burma for 1891*. Rangoon: Government Press, 1892.
- Grant Brown, G. E. R., comp. *Burma as I Saw It 1889–1917*. London: Methuen, 1926.
- . *Burma Gazetteer: Upper Chindwin District*. Vol. A. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1929.
- Gyi-thei-lè-tab hsayadaw. *Maha-win Wuttu-daw-gyi hnín Zambudipa sa-dàn (kaw 'Theinko ya-zawin')*. Yangon: Gandama, 1961.
- Hall, D. G. E. "Anglo-Burmese Conflicts in the 19th Century: A Reassessment of Their Causes." *Asia* 6 (August 1966): 35–52.
- . *Burma*. London: Longmans, 1950.
- , ed. *The Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence 1852–1856*. London: Oxford University Press, 1932.
- . *Early English Interchange with Burma 1587–1743*. 2nd ed. London, 1968.
- . "Henry Burney: Diplomat and Orientalist." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 41 (December 1958): 100–110.
- Hallisey, Charles. "Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravada Buddhism." In *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, 31–62. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Hamilton, Alexander. *A New Account of the East Indies*. Ed. William Foster. London: Argonaut Press, 1930.
- Hardiman, J. P., comp. *Burma Gazetteer: Lower Chindwin District*. Vol. A. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1912.
- Harvey, G. E. *History of Burma: From the Earliest Times to 10 March 1824: The Beginning of the English Conquest*. New York: Octagon Books, 1967.
- Hertz, William A. *Report on the Settlement Operations in the Magwe District, Season 1897–1903*. Rangoon: British Burma Press, 1903.

- Hewett, H. P., and J. Clague, comps. *Burma Gazetteer: Bassein District*. Vol. A. Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1916.
- Hla Pe, Ü. *Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life, and Buddhism*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985.
- . "Letteratura Birmana." 1–43.
- . "The Rise of Popular Literature in Burma." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 51.2 (1968): 125–44.
- Hman-nàn maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi. Vol.1. Mandalay: Royal Press, 1883; Vol. 3. Mandalay: Ko Hla Maung, 1955.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*. Rev. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Holt, John Clifford. *Buddha in the Crown: Avalokitesvara in the Buddhist Traditions of Sri Lanka*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Holt, John Clifford, Jacob N. Kinnard, and Jonathan S. Walters, eds. *Constituting Communities: Theravāda Buddhism and the Religious Cultures of South and Southeast Asia*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2003.
- Houtman, Gustaaf. *Human Origins: Myanmafication and "Disciplined" Burmese Democracy*. N.I. Pekhon University Press, 1999.
- Hpyaw, Ü. *Paleik-sa ei-gyin. Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1907*.
- Htin Aung, Maung. *Burmese History Before 1287: A Defence of the Chronicles*. Oxford: Asoka Society, 1970.
- , comp. and tr. *Burmese Monk's Tales*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1966.
- . *A History of Burma*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1967.
- . "Kinwun Mingyi's Mission to the Court of Versailles, 1874." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 56.1 and 56. 2 (1973): 47–58.
- Hunter, William. M. D. *A Concise Account of the Kingdom of Pegu*. Calcutta: John Hay, 1785.
- Huxley, Andrew. "The Village Knows Best: Social Organization in an 18th Century Burmese Law Code." *South East Asia Research* 5 (1997): 1–32.
- Ikuno, Zenno. "Nine Sect (gaings) of Theravada Buddhism in Burma." In *Burma and Japan: Basic Studies on Heir Cultural and Social Structure*. Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 1981.
- Jones, Peter Murray. "Introduction." In *The Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages; An Account of the Development and Progress of the Art of Illumination, As a Distinct Branch of Pictorial Ornamentation, From the IVth to the XVIIth Centuries*, ed. Henry Noel Humphreys, 1–8. London: Bracken Books, 1989.
- Judson, Adoniram. *Judson's Burmese-English Dictionary*. Unabridged Centenary Ed. Rangoon: Baptist Board of Publications, 1953.
- . "Mr. Judson's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 11.5 (May 1831), 151–53.
- Judson, Edward. *The Life of Adoniram Judson*. New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1883.
- Kabui, Gangmumei. *History of Manipur*. 2 vols. New Delhi: National Publishing House, 1991.
- Kalā, Maung [Ü Kalā]. *Maha-ya-zawin-gyi*. Vols. 1–2. Ed. Saya Pwa, Rangoon: Burma Research Society. 1926, 1932; Vol. III. Ed. Saya U Khin Soe. Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1961.

- Kaung, Ü. "A Survey of the History of Education in Burma Before the British Conquest and After." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 46.2 (1963): 1–124.
- Kawisara, Shin. "Rakhine Arei-daw-poun" [Palm-leaf manuscript number 136913] AMs, 1839 [copy of the 1787 original], National Library, Ministry of Culture, Yangon, Union of Myanmar.
- Keyes, Charles F. "The Karen in Thai History and the History of the Karen in Thailand." In *Ethnic Adaptation and Identity: The Karen on the Thai Frontier with Burma*, ed. Charles Keyes, 25–61. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1979.
- Kincaid, Eugenio. "Kincaid's Journal." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 13.11 (November 1833); 14.7 (July 1834); 15.2 (February 1835); 15.5 (May 1835); 15.9 (September 1835); 16.5 (May 1836); 16.7 (July 1836); 16.8 (August 1836); 16.9 (September 1836); 16.12 (December, 1836).
- . "Letter from Eugenio Kincaid to Adoniram Judson, dated Ava, 24 July 1833." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 14.9 (September 1834).
- Kin Ei, Ü (Danubyu). *Sa-hso-daw-mya Adduppatti*. Yangon: Ya-pyi-sa-oub-taik, 2002.
- Kin-wun Min-gyi. *Landan-myo-thwa-ne-sin-hmat sa-dàn*. 2 vols. Yangon, 1908.
- . *Pyin-thit-naing-ngan-thwa né-sin-hmat sa-dàn*. Ed. Pe Maung Tin. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1939.
- King, Victor T., and W. D. Wilder. "Southeast Asia and the Concept of Ethnicity." *Southeast Asia Journal of Social Science* 10.1 (1982): 1–6.
- Koenig, William J. *The Burmese Polity, 1752–1819: Politics, Administration, and Social Organization in the Early Konbaung Period*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1990.
- Kyan, Ma. "King Mindon's Councillors." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 44.1 (1961): 43–60.
- . "Twan: San: Wan Mahā Cañsū Ü: Rhwai." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 45.1 (1962): 29–39.
- Lane, Charles. *A Dictionary, English and Burmese*. Calcutta: Ostell and Lepage, 1841.
- Langham-Carter, R. R. "The Burmese Army." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 27.3 (1937): 254–76.
- . "Burmese Rule on the Toungoo Frontier." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 27.1 (1937): 15–32.
- . "Four Notables of the Lower Chindwin." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 30.1 (1940): 336–42.
- . "The Kinwun Mingyi at Home." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 25.3 (1935): 121–28.
- . "The Lower Chindwin Nats." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 23 (1933): 97–106; 24.2 (1934): 105–11.
- . "Maha Bandula at Home." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 26 (1936): 122–29.
- Leach, E. R. *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure*. London: Athlone Press, 1954.
- Leider, Jacques. "Text, Lineage and Tradition in Burma: The Struggle for Norms and Religious Legitimacy under King Bodawphaya (1782–1819)." *Journal of Burma Studies* 9 (2004): 82–129.

- Lehman, F. K. "Ethnic Categories in Burma and the Theory of Social Systems." In *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities, and Nations*, ed. Peter Kunstadter, 1.93–124. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.
- Let-wè-naw-yahta. "Alaung-mìn-tayà-gyi Ayei-daw-bon." In *Alaung-hpayà Ayei-daw-bon Hnasaung-dwè*, ed. Û Hlá Tin, 1–152. Rangoon: 1961. (Due to the misattribution of this text to Let-wè-naw-yahta, and to the fact that Tun Nyo, under the title of Twin-thìn *taik-wun* Maha-si-thu, produced a later version that has been given the same title, this work will be cited in the text as [Tun Nyo], "Alaung-mìn-tayà-gyi Ayei-daw-bon," in Û Hlá Tin, ed., *Alaung-hpayà Ayei-daw-bon hnasaung-dwè* (Rangoon, 1961): 1–152.)
- . "Pyuha-sakki-pyó." In Û Ba Thaung (ed.), *Thenanga-pyuha-sit-thamaing hnin Pyuha-sakki-pyó*, ed. Û Ba Thaung, 55–120. Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1943.
- . "Thenanga-pyuha-sit-thamaing." In *Thenanga-pyuha-sit-thamaing hnin Pyuha-sakki-pyó*, ed. Û Ba Thaung, 1–53. Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1943.
- Lieberman, Victor B. *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580–1760*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- . "Ethnic Politics in Eighteenth-Century Burma." *Modern Asian Studies* 12 (1978): 455–82.
- . "How Reliable Is Û Kala's Burmese Chronicle? Some New Comparisons." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 17 (1986): 236–255.
- . "Local Integration and Eurasian Analogies: Structuring Southeast Asian History, c. 1350–c. 1830." *Modern Asian Studies* 27 (1993): 475–572.
- . "A New Look at the Sasanavamsa." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39 (1976): 137–49.
- . "Political Consolidation in Burma Under the Early Konbaung Dynasty, 1752–c. 1820." *Journal of Asian History* 30.2 (1996): 152–68.
- . *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global context, c. 800–1830*. Vol. 1. *Integration on the Mainland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Lopez, Donald S., Jr. *Buddhism: An Introduction and Guide*. London: Penguin, 2001.
- , ed. *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Low, James. "History of Tenasserim." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2 (1835): 248–75; 3 (1836): 25–54; 3 (1836): 287–336; 4 (1837): 42–108; 4 (1837): 304–32; 5 (1838–39): 141–64; 216–63.
- Luce, G. H. "A Century of Progress in Burmese History and Archaeology." *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, 32.1 (1948): 79–94.
- . "Geography of Burma Under the Pagan Dynasty." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 52.1 (1959): 32–74.
- Maha-damá-thin-gyan [Shin Nyanabhivamsa]. *Tha-thana-lin-ga-yá sa-dàn*. Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1956.
- Maha-si-thu Twin-thìn *Taik-wun*. *Twin-thìn Myanma Ya-zawin Thet*. Vol. 1. Rangoon: Mingala Ponhneik Press, 1968.
- Maha Thilawuntha, Shin. *Ya-zawin Kyaw*. Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1965.
- Maier, Hendrik M. J. *In the Center of Authority: The Malay Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*. Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1988.

- Malcom, Howard. *Travels in South-Eastern Asia*. 2nd ed. 2 vols. Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1839.
- Manucci, Niccolao. *Storia do Mogor: Or Mogul India 1653–1708*. Tr. William Irvine. 4 vols. London: John Murray, 1906–1907.
- Marks, John. *Forty Years in Burma*, ed. W. C. B. Purser. London: Hutchinson, 1917.
- Maung Maung Tin, Û. "Shei-ga-binnya-daw-thin-mya." *Myawaddy* 8.1 (1959): 25–27.
- . *Shwe-nàn-thoün Wa-ha-ya Abhidan*. Vol. 1. Rangoon: Buddha Sasana Ahpwe Press, 1975.
- Maung Maung Tin, Û., and Thomas Owen Morris. "Mindon Min's Development Plan for the Manadaly Area." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 49.1 (1966): 30–32.
- Maxim, Sarah Heminway. "The Resemblance in External Appearance: The Colonial Project in Kuala Lumpur and Rangoon." PhD diss. Ithaca: Cornell University, 1992.
- Mei-hiti *hsayadaw*. *Vamsa Dipani*. Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1966.
- Mendelson, E. Michael. *Sangha and State in Burma: A Study of Monastic Sectarianism and Leadership*, ed. John P. Ferguson. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975.
- Min-gyaw-ya-za. "Wun-gyi hmü-gyi-mya achaung." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 45.2 (1962): 137–62.
- Min-gyi Maha-thiri-zeiya-thu. *Pitakat Thamaing-sa-dàn*. Rangoon: Thudhamawadi Press, 1905.
- Min Naing, Maung. "Italians in the Service of Burmese Kings in Late Nineteenth Century." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 62.1–2 (December 1979): 177–214.
- Minayeff, I. P. *Travels in and Diaries of India & Burma*. Tr. Hirendranath Sanyal. Calcutta: Debi Prasad Mukhopadhyaya, 1959.
- Morrison, W. S. *Burma Gazetteer: Henzada District*. Vol. A. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1915.
- Mrázek, Rudolf. *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colony*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Myanma-Ingalei-Abhidan*. Yangon: Ministry of Education, 2001.
- Mya Sein, Daw. *The Administration of Burma*. With an introduction by Josef Silverstein. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Myo Myint, Û. "The Politics of Survival in Burma: Diplomacy and Statecraft in the Reign of King Mindon, 1853–1878." PhD diss. Ithaca: Cornell University, 1987.
- . "Towards a Bibliography of the Life and Time of Mindon, King of Myanmar, 1853–1878." In *Études Birmanes*, ed. Pierre Pichard and François Robinne, 75–87. Paris: EFEO, 1998.
- Na-wa-dè. *Assam-naing-ngan Maw-gùn*. Ed. Û Sein Win. Rangoon: Burma Research Society, 1958.
- Naono, Atsuko. "The State of Vaccination: British Doctors, Indigenous Cooperation, and the Fight against Smallpox in Colonial Burma." PhD diss. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2005.
- Nga Mi. "Rakhine Ra-zawin." MS 3465a, AMs, n.d. [circa 1840], Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library, London.
- Nisbet, John. *Burma Under British Rule—And Before*. 2 vols. London: Archibald Constable, 1901.
- Nostitz, Countess Pauline. *Travels of Doctor and Madame Helfer in Syria*,

- Mesopotamia, Burmah, and Other Lands*. Tr. George Sturge. London: Richard Bentley and Sons, 1878.
- Nyanabhivamsa, Shin [Maha-damā-thin-gyan]. "Rajadhiraja Vilasini or the Manifestation of the King of Kings." Ed. and tr. Pe Maung Tin. *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 4.1 (1914): 7–22.
- Nyo Mya. *Kôn-baung-sha-poun-daw*. Yangon: Myawaddi, 1997.
- Ohno Toru. *A Study of Burmese Rama Story*. Osaka: Osaka University, 1999.
- Okkantha, Ashin. "History of Buddhism in Arakan." PhD diss. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1990.
- Okudaira, Ryūji. "Features of the Theravada Buddhist State Structure with Special Reference to the Muddha Beiktheik ('Supreme Coronation Ceremony') as Observed by King Badon in Eighteenth Century Myanmar." In *Proceedings of the Myanmar Two Millennia Conference 15–17 December 1999*, 3.120–32. Yangon: Universities Historical Research Centre, 2000.
- . "Rekishiteki Haikei." In *Motto Shiritai Myanmar*, ed. Ayabe Tsuneo and Ishii Yoneo, 2nd ed., 9–13. Tokyo: Kobundo, 1994. (Atsuko Naono thankfully translated this work for the author.)
- . "A Serious Problem Caused by Printing of a Burmese Manuscript—Richardson's Text of the *Manugye Dhammathat* or a Law Book." Paper presented at the Symposium in Honour of U Pe Maung Tin, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 11–13 September 1998.
- Okudaira, Ryūji, and Andrew Huxley. "A Burmese Tract on Kingship: Political Theory in the 1782 manuscript of *Manugye*." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 64.2 (2001): 248–59.
- Olson, David R., and Nancy Thomas, eds. *The Making of Literate Societies*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.
- Owens, F. C. *Burma Gazetteer: Pakokku District*. Vol. A. Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1913.
- Page, A. J. *Burma Gazetteer: Pegu District*. Vol. A. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1915.
- Paññāsami, Shin. [*Sasanavamsa*]. *The History of Buddha's Religion*. Tr. Bimala Churn Law. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1986.
- Paton, Charles. "Historical and Statistical Sketch of Arakan." *Asiatic Researches* 16 (1828): 353–81.
- Pearn, B. R. *A History of Rangoon*. Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press, 1939.
- . ed. "A Burma Diary of 1810." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 27.3 (1937): 283–307.
- . "Arakan and the First Anglo-Burmese War, 1824–25." *Far Eastern Quarterly* 4.1 (November 1944): 27–40.
- . "Felix Carey and the English Baptist Mission in Burma." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 28.1 (1938): 1–9–1.
- Pe Maung Tin. *History of Burmese Literature: Myanma Sabei Thamine*. Rangoon: Thudhammawadi Press, 1955.
- . "Introduction." In *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*, tr. Pe Maung Tin and G. H. Luce, ix–xxiii. London: Oxford University Press, 1923.
- Pemberton, Robert Boileau. "Abstract of the Journal of a Route Travelled by Captain S. F. Hannay." In *Selection of Papers Regarding the Hill Tracts between Assam and*

- Burmah and on the Upper Brahmaputra*, 83–109. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1873.
- . "Journal from Manipoor to Ava, and from Thence Across the Yooma Mountains to Arracan." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 43.2 (December, 1960): 1–96.
- Phayre, Arthur P. *History of Burma including Burma Proper, Pegu, Taungu, Tenasserim, and Arakan: From the Earliest Time to the End of the First War with British India*. London: Trübner, 1883.
- . "On the History of Arakan." *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 13 (1844): 23–52.
- . "On the History of the Burma Race." *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 2 (1869): 29–82.
- . "Private Journal of His Mission to Ava in 1855." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 22.2 (1932): 68–89.
- "Phongsawadan Môn Phama." Ms summary of generously provided by Ken Breazeale.
- Pò Hlaing, Û. "Raza-damma-thingaha-kyàn." In *Yaw Mìn-gyì Û Pò Hlaing Addup-patti hnin Raza-damma-thingaha-kyàn*, ed. Maung Tin, 141–311. Yangon: Unity, 2002.
- . *U-du Baw-za-na Thingaha-kyàn*. Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1974.
- Pollak, Oliver B. *Empires in Collision: Anglo-Burmese Relations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979.
- Pranke, Patrick Arthur. "The 'Treatise on the Lineage of Elders' (Vamsadipani): Monastic Reform and the Writing of Buddhist History in Eighteenth-Century Burma." PhD diss. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2004.
- "Rakhine Mìn-ra-za-grì Arei-daw sa-dàn." MS 1632, AMs, 1784 [1775], National Library, Ministry of Culture, Yangon, Union of Myanmar.
- "Rakhine Ra-zawin." MS 95, AMs, 1791, Museum of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, India.
- "Rakhine Ra-zawin-nei." MS 3413, AMs [no date], Oriental India Office Collection. British Library, London.
- Rangon-myo Banat Pitaka-daik shi, Lek-ye sabei-sa Sayin hnin Kinwun Mìn-gyì tanhma ya-shi-the, Lek-ye sabei-sa Sayin*. Rangoon: Pyi-gyì Mankine, 1906.
- Rapin de Thoyras, Paul de. *The History of England*. 2nd ed., 2 vols. Tr. N. Tindall. London, 1732.
- Rees, Abraham, comp. *The Cyclopaedia; or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*. 2nd ed. 39 vols and six vols. of illustrations. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819.
- Reid, Anthony. *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680*. Vol. 1. *The Lands Below the Winds*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- . *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*. Vol. 2. *Expansion and Crisis*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.
- Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Indigenous System of Medicine*. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1951.
- Reynolds, Craig J. "The Buddhist Monkhood in Nineteenth Century Thailand." PhD diss. Ithaca: Cornell University, 1972.
- . "Religious Writing and the Legitimation of the First Bangkok Reign." In *Per-*

- ceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr, 90–107. Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979.
- Riggs, Fred W. *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity*. Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966.
- Robertson, Thomas Campbell. *Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*. London: Richard Bentley, 1853.
- Saito, Teruko. "Rural Monetization and Land-mortgage Thet-kayits in Kon-baung Burma." In *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea 1750–1792*, ed. Anthony Reid, 153–84. London: Houndmills, 1997.
- Samantapasadika Silavamsa, Shin. *Zata-daw-pon Ya-zawin*. Ed. Û Hla Tin. Rangoon: Ministry of Culture, 1960.
- Sandá-lin-ka, Shin. *Mani-yadana-poun*. Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1901.
- Sangermano, Father Vincenzo. *The Burmese Empire a Hundred Years Ago*. With an introduction and notes by John Jardine. London: Edinburgh University Press, 1893.
- Sàn Maung, Û (Monywa). *Maungdaung Wàn-kyin Kyè-moun-pyin*. Yangon: Pali Paragu, 1989.
- Saulière, Rev. A., tr. "The Jesuits on Pegu at the End of the XVIth Century." *Bengal Past and Present* 19 (1919): 64–80.
- Saw Tun, U. *Pagan-ket Myanma-sa*. 4 vols. Rangoon: Cape Birman Press, 1996.
- Scott, J. G. *Burma: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924.
- . *Burma: A Handbook of Practical Information*. London: Daniel O'Conner, 1906.
- Scott, J. G., and J. R. Hardiman. *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*. Parts 1 and 2. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1900–1901.
- Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. London: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Searle, H. F., comp. *Burma Gazetteer: Mandalay District*. Vol. A. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1928.
- Seit Mò, *Sik-thu-gyi Maha Bandula ei Bawa-ka-yi*. Yangon: Minzu Sabei, 2002.
- Seneviratne, H. L. "Religion and the Legitimacy of Power in the Kandyan Kingdom." In *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Sri Lanka*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith, 177–87. Chalmersburg: Anima Books, 1978.
- Shway Yoe [J. G. Scott]. *The Burman His Life and Notions*. London: MacMillan, 1910.
- Shwe-hintha *hsayadaw*. *Shwe-gyin-nikaya-thathana-win*. Rangoon: n.p., 1963.
- Shwe Tun, Û. *Journal of a Visit to Calcutta in the Year 1835*. Maulmein: Free School Press, 1836.
- Simons, Thomas. "Extracts from the Journal of Mr. Simons at Rangoon." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16.11 (November 1836); 16.12 (December 1836); 19.10 (October 1839).
- Singer, Noel F. *The Sorcerer-King and the 'Great Abortion' at Mingun*. New Delhi: APH Publishing, 2004.
- Singh, R. K. Jhalajit. *A Short History of Manipur*. 2nd rev. ed. Imphal: n.p., 1992.
- Sithu-gammani-thinkyan. "Rakhine Ra-zawin." MS 2297, AMs, 1886 [ca. 1870s], National Library, Ministry of Culture, Yangon, Union of Myanmar.

- Smart, R. B., comp. *Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District*. Vol. A. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1917.
- Smith, Anthony D. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.
- Smith, Donald E. *Religion and Politics in Burma*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965.
- Snodgrass, Major. *Narrative of the Burmese War*. London: J. Murray, 1827.
- "Some Account of Moulmein." *Colonial Magazine and East India Review* 3 (Sept. to Dec., 1844): 195–98.
- Stadtner, Donald M. "The Enigma of the Mingun Pagoda: is the Pagoda Really Unfinished?" *Proceedings of the Myanmar Two Millennia Conference*, 3.94–119. Yangon: Universities Historical Research Center, 2000.
- Standage, Tom. *The Mechanical Turk: The True Story of the Chess-Playing Machine That Fooled the World*. London: Penguin Books, 2002.
- Stewart, John Alexander. *Buddhism in Burma*. London: University of London, 1949.
- . "Note on Some Authorities for the History of Burma," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 13.2 (1923): 69–76.
- Stewart, John Alexander, and C. W. Dunn, comps. *A Burmese English Dictionary*. 3 pts (incomplete). Rangoon: University of Rangoon, 1940.
- ~~Swearer, Donald K. "Buddhism in Southeast Asia." In *Buddhism in Asian History*, ed. Joseph M. Kitagawa and Mark D. Cummings, 107–29. New York: MacMillan, 1989.~~
- Symes, Michael. *Account of an Embassy to Ava*. London: Bulmer, 1800.
- . *Journal of His Second Embassy to the Court of Ava in 1802*. Edited, with an introduction by D. G. E. Hall. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1955.
- Taung-yin Hsè-pyinnya Thamaing. Yangon: Gyàn-ma-yè-wun-gyi-tana, 1978.
- Tambiah, S. J. "King Mahasammata: The First King in the Buddhist Story of Creation and His Continuing Relevance." *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 20 (1989): 101–22.
- . *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Tarling, Nicholas. "The Bowring Mission: The Mellersh Narrative." *Journal of the Siam Society* 63.1 (January 1975): 105–26.
- Taylor, J. L. *Forest Monks and the Nation-State: An Anthropological and Historical Study in Northeastern Thailand*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993.
- Taylor, Robert. "Perceptions of Ethnicity in the Politics of Burma." *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* 10.1 (1982): 7–22.
- . *The State in Burma*. London: C. Hurst, 1987.
- Tet Htoot, Û. "The Nature of Burmese Chronicles." In *Historians of South East Asia*, ed., D. G. E. Hall, 50–62. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Thant-Myint U. *The Making of Modern Burma*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Than Tun, ed. *Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma by Professor Than Tun*. Ed. Paul Strachan. Whiting Bay, Scotland: Kiscadale Publications, 1988.
- . *The Royal Orders of Burma, A. D. 1598–1885*. 10 vols. Kyoto: Centre for South-east Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1984–1990.

- Thaung, Ü. "Burmese Kingship in Theory and Practice under the Reign of King Mindon." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 42 (1959): 171-84.
- Thaung Blackmore, Ü. "The Founding of the City of Mandalay by King Mindon." *Journal of Oriental Studies* 5 (1959 and 1960): 82-97.
- Thaw Kaung, Ü. "Two Compilers of Myanmar History and Their Chronicles." Unpublished.
- Thi-rí-ú-zana. *Làw-ká-byu-ha-kyàn*. Rangoon: n.p., 1968.
- Thu-da-sana, U. *Maingdaung Youb-loun-paw-li-ka*. Yangon: Yei-mya-lun sa-bei, 1998.
- Tin, Pe Maung. "Introduction." In *Yaw Min-gyi Û Pò Hlaing Adduppatti hnín Raza-damma-thingaha-kyàn*, 1-140. Yangon: Unity, 2002.
- Tin, Ü. *Kòn-baung-hset maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi*. 3 vols. Rangoon: Leidi Makkaiing, 1968.
- . *Myan-ma-mìn Ok-chok-pon sa-dàn*. 5 vols. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1931-1933.
- Tin Hswei, Ü. *Tha-thana-wuntha Dipani*. Rangoon: Leidi Makkaiing, 1974.
- Tin Naing Tò. *Kòn-baung-ket Awè Myó-wun*. Yangon: Pyi-soun, 2002.
- Tin Ohn. "Modern Historical Writing in Burmese, 1724-1942." In *Historians of South East Asia*, ed. D. G. E. Hall, 85-93. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Tin Ü, Ü. *Mìn-nàn-sí-éi-gyìn*. Rangoon: Burma Research Society, 1961.
- Toe Hla, Ü. "Money-Lending and Contractual 'Thet-kayits': A Socio-Economic Pattern of the Later Kon-baung Period, 1819-1885." PhD diss. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, 1987.
- . *Chindwin-myt-tha Mù-ei-ya*. Monywa, 1995.
- Toffler, Alvin. *Future Shock*. New York: Random House, 1970.
- Trager, Frank N., and William J. Koenig. *Burmese Sit-tans 1764-1826: Records of Rural Life and Administration*. Assisted by Daw Yi Yi. Tucson: Association for Asian Studies, 1979.
- Tun Nyein, ed. and tr. *Inscriptions of Pagan, Pinya, and Ava: Translations, With Notes*. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Press, 1899.
- Tun Nyo. "Alaung-mìn-tayà-gyi Ayei-daw-bon." In *Alaung-hpayà Ayei-daw-bon hnasaung-dwè*, ed. Ü Hlá Tin, 1-152. Rangoon: Ministry of Culture, 1961. (This work was formerly misattributed to Let-wè-naw-yahta.)
- Twin-thin-taik-wun Maha-si-thu. "Alaung-mìn-tayà-gyi Ayei-daw-bon." In *Alaung-hpayà Ayei-daw-bon hnasaung-dwè*, ed. Ü Hlá Tin, 153-233. Rangoon: Ministry of Culture, 1961. (This work is the second produced by the author under the same title. The first is listed above under his name and the second, that listed here, is under the title he held when he completed the work.)
- . *Myanma Ya-zawin-thet*. Vol. 1. Rangoon: Mingala Press, 1968.
- Vertue, George. *The Heads of the Kings of England Proper for Mr. Rapin's History*. Tr. N. Tindall London, 1736.
- Wade, Jonathan. "Journal of Rev. Mr. Wade." *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 13.2 (February, 1833).
- . "Rev. Wade's Journal," *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 13.5 (May 1833).
- Webb, Abner. "Extract of a Letter from Mr. Webb to Dr. L. Bolles, Dated 12 March 1835." *Baptist Missionary Press* 15.11 (November 1835).
- Weber, Max. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Edited by Guenther Roth & Claus Wittich. 2 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

- West, J., and C. B. Little. *Gazetteer of Manipur, The Country between It and Ava, and Some of the Adjacent Hill Tracts*. Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1884.
- Wheeler, J. Talboys. *Journal of a Voyage Up the Irrawaddy to Mandalay and Bhamo*. Rangoon: J. W. Baynes, 1871.
- White, Herbert Thirkell. *A Civil Servant in Burma*. London: Edward Arnold, 1913.
- White, W. A. *A Political History of the Extraordinary Events Which Led to the Burmese War*. London: W. Sams, 1827.
- Wijayaratna, Mohan. *Buddhist Monastic Life According to the Texts of the Theravada Tradition*. Tr. Claude Grangier and Steven Collins. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Wilkie, R. S. *Burma Gazetteer: The Yamethin District*. Vol. A. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1934.
- Williamson, A. *Burma Gazetteer: Shwebo District*. Vol. A. Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1929.
- Winichakul, Thongchai. *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994.
- . "The Quest for 'Siwilat': A Geographical Discourse of Civilizational Thinking in the Late 19th and Early 20th C. Siam." *Journal of Asian Studies* 59.3 (2000): 528-49.
- Woodman, Dorothy. *The Making of Modern Burma*. London: Cresset Press, 1962.
- Woodside, Alexander B. *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Vietnamese and Chinese Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, Mass.: Council of East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1988.
- Wun-zin Min-yaza. "Ya-zawin-gei." MS 3047, AMs, 1833, Oriental and India Office Collection. British Library, London.
- Wyatt, David K. "Chronicle Traditions in Thai Historiography." In *Southeast Asian History and Historiography: Essays Presented to D. G. E. Hall*, ed. C. D. Cowan and O. W. Wolters, 107-22. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976.
- . "History and Directionality in the Early Nineteenth-Century Tai World." In *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea, 1750-1900*, ed. Anthony Reid, 425-43. London: MacMillan Press, 1997.
- . "The Eighteenth Century in Southeast Asia." In *On the Eighteenth Century as a Category of Asian History*, ed. Leonard Blussé and Fernme Gaastra, 39-55. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998.
- . "The 'Subtle Revolution' of King Rama I of Siam." In *Moral Order and the Question of Change: Essays on Southeast Asian Thought*, ed. Alexander Woodside and David K. Wyatt, 9-52. New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1982.
- Yaw, U. "Taingdà Mìn-gyi." *Myanma-swei-soun-kyan*. Rangoon: Government Press, 5.112-16.
- Yule, Henry. *A Narrative of the Mission Sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855, With Notices of the Country, Government, and People*. London: Smith, Elder, 1858.
- Zei-yá-thin-hkaya. *Shwe-bon-ní-dàn*. Rangoon: Zwei-sa-bei-reib-myoun, 1957.

Index

- Abaya-maha-ra-za, King, 83
 Abbona, Father, 173
Abhidamma-pitaka, 40
 Abhiraja myth, 78–83, 85, 87–88, 112,
 117–18, 120–21, 143
 administration
 British, 260–21, 267
 Burmese, 54, 61, 72, 73, 98, 99, 225, 234,
 246, 258
 departments, 61–62, 226, 246,
 252
 European model, 229, 246
 interior ministers (*atwin-wuns*), 60,
 67, 244, 250, 253
 See also Council of Ministers; depart-
 ments; Privy Council
Administrative Precedents of the Burman
Rulers, 142, 258, 260
 Aggadhammalankara, Shin, 23–24,
 40–42
ahmá-dāns. *See* servicemen
 Akyab, 187, 195, 223
 Alaung-hpayá, King, 23, 37, 58, 60,
 63–64, 71–78, 84, 86, 88, 91, 95, 101,
 110, 122, 134–17, 141, 150, 151, 153n16,
 155, 218, 224, 263, 268
 Alaung-sithu, King, 70, 133, 143
 Albany, 157
 alchemy, 182
 algebra, 166, 230
 almanacs, 157, 170
 Alon. *See* Badon
 Amarapura, 52, 64–65, 89, 99, 111, 117,
 140, 144, 162, 186, 203, 207, 209, 217,
 234
 Amyin, 20
 Amyin Nga-myo (“the Amyin five
 towns”), 15
 Amyin Prince, 59, 78
 anatomy, 162, 180, 230
 Anauk-hpet-lun, King, 20
 Anaw-rahta, King, 31, 70, 105
 Anderson, Benedict, 8
 Anglo-Burmese Wars, 222
 First, 3, 14, 15, 106, 112, 114–15, 123,
 129–30, 139, 148, 157, 183, 191, 200
 Second, 15, 123, 201, 228
 Third, 247, 256
 animal sanctuaries, 206
 anthropology and anthropologists, 1, 4
 appanages, 50, 58–61, 65, 69, 92, 161
 aquariums, 147, 175
 Araham, Shin, 31, 145
 Arahants, 105
 Arakan and the Arakanese, 31, 32n23, 52,
 60, 79–83, 87, 115, 117–18, 122, 124,
 125, 128–30, 133–34, 140–41, 143–44,
 152, 210, 228, 268
 Burmese rule over, 202, 244, 268–269
See also Mugs
Arakan Chronicle. *See* *Life of Mm-ra-za-*
gri of Arakan
 Arakan Yoma, 87, 133
 Ariyalankara, Shin, 23
 Asiatic Society of Bengal, 166
 Assam, 122, 152, 202, 208
 astrology and astrologers, 30, 170, 233
 astronomy, 54, 156, 163, 170, 230, 239. *See*
 also solar-system
athis. *See* free men
 Athwa, monk of, 114
Atthasalini, 41

- Atula, Shin, 23, 43, 95, 97–98, 189–90
atwin-wuns. See interior ministers
 Aukthas (Deltaic Burmans), 133–35
 Aung Ko, Ü, 252
 Aung Thu, Maung, 231
 Aung-Thwin, Michael, 63n36, 127
 Austria, 238
 Ava, 20, 31, 51, 63, 72, 73n5, 77, 79, 83, 85,
 113, 121, 126, 128, 133, 136, 143, 186,
 203, 210
 Aw, Ü (Seinda Kyaw-thu), 62
 Ayudhya. See Siam
 Azadathat, King, 70
- Badon, 1, 15, 17, 20, 21, 23, 58–60, 62n32,
 64–66, 69, 92, 206, 213, 234
 Bagaya *hsayadaw*, first. See Dhammabi-
 nanda
 Bagaya *hsayadaw*, second, 204–6
 Bagaya Monastery, 234
 Ba-gyi-daw, King, 45, 47n56, 53,
 67n53, 105–6, 108, 112, 116, 120–21,
 123, 131, 137, 155–56, 158, 161–63,
 177–78, 184, 187, 191, 198, 200, 203,
 209, 218
Balance, The, 175
 balloons, 230
 Bangkok, 10n19, 158, 166, 170, 261
 Banyà-dalá, King, 75–76, 136
 Barberis, Tarsillo, 229n23
 Bassein, 223
 Baw, Ü, 172, 173, 187
 Bayfield, G. T., 121
 Bayin-naung, 129, 140
 Bayly, C. A., 11, 12, 182
 Bein-bi-thara, King, 70
 Bengal, 45, 86, 105, 111–12, 115, 129–30,
 147, 175, 183, 195–96
Bengal Almanack, 170
 Bennett, Cephas, 173–78, 183, 185
 Bennett, Paul J., 242
 Bible, 173, 186, 190
 Bigandet, Paul Ambroise, 205
binya-daw-thins (state scholars), 46,
 230–32, 238, 243
Biography of Great King Alaung [hpaya],
 88, 136
- Blackburn, Anne, 13, 14, 27, 28, 39, 40, 42,
 47, 48
 Blundell, E. A., 146–47
 Bò-daw-hpayà, King, 1, 15, 27, 30, 37, 38,
 43, 45–47, 52, 53, 58–62, 65–67, 69,
 71, 75, 83–7, 89–96, 98–99, 101–12,
 114, 117–20, 138–45, 154–55, 161–62,
 166, 169–71, 182, 191, 198, 200, 202–3,
 206, 207, 209, 211–15, 217–18, 228,
 241, 249, 250, 256, 262–64, 268,
 269
 Boardman, George Dana, 190
 Bodhgaya, 147, 175
 Bonaparte, Napoleon, 220, 237
 book collecting, 114
 Boston, 183
 botanical gardens, 237
 botany, 163, 168, 230
 Bowring, John, 158
 Bowring Treaty, 227
 Brac de la Perrière, Bénédict, 111
 Brahmanic rituals, 11, 45–46, 49, 72, 84,
 86, 95, 100, 249–50, 263
 Brahmins, 12, 45, 46, 47, 49, 68, 70, 72,
 87, 99, 160, 170, 248–49
 encourage Indian learning, 265
 and history writing, 47n56
 British Residency, 247
 British rule in Burma
 brevity of, 265
 Burmese adaptation to, 265
 Burmese resistance to, 265
 Burmese views on, 254n34, 265
 consequences of, 127, 266
 end of, 266
 impact of 1885 conquest, 264
 1945–1947, 266n9
 war prize committee, 261, 70n1
 Buchanan, Francis, 125–27, 137, 155,
 168–69
 Budalin, 1, 15, 206
 Buddhaghosa, Shin, 41, 97
 Buddhism, 6, 11
 Burmans, 136. See also Aukthas
 Burmese language, 190n27
 Burney, Henry, 113, 120–21, 162–63, 166,
 178, 191, 196

- cakravartin*, 90, 102, 201–2
 Calcutta, 46, 146–47, 158, 162, 166, 174,
 175, 183, 195, 196, 221, 231
camera obscura, 155–56
 Candabanya, Shin, 20, 78
 Carey, Felix, 46, 168, 182
Catechism of Geography, 175
 Catholic priests, 150–51
 celebratory records, 85
 censorship, Burmese
 contemporary, 269n10
 precolonial, 47n56, 107n47, 116, 194
 census, colonial, 55
 chess, 220–21
 chief of religious affairs (*thathanabaing*),
 18, 23, 37, 39, 42–44, 47, 93, 96, 101,
 194, 203–7, 210, 211, 213, 215–18
 Chiengmai, 48
 captives from, 68
 Chin Hills, 63
 Chin-pyan, 117, 127, 130
 China and the Chinese, 52, 57, 125, 130,
 142, 160, 182, 197, 199, 241, 267
 Chindwin River and Valley, 1, 45, 61–62,
 63n35, 64, 207
 Chins, 63, 142, 144
 Chittagong, 111
 Chittagong Hill Tracts, 125
 Christianity, 11, 13, 151, 170, 181–82,
 186–90, 193–94, 199
 Christian missionaries, 11, 14, 56, 106,
 126, 131, 151, 168, 170–73, 176–77, 179,
 181–83, 186–93, 199, 200, 218
 chronicles, 4–7, 15, 17, 47n56, 81, 90, 116,
 118, 122, 127–28, 145, 204, 261
 Chulalongkorn, King, 254
 Clermont, 157
 Cole, Juan, 10
 colonialism, 3, 255, 266–67
 contractual records (*thekkarits*), 55
 conversion, religious, 39, 138, 151, 187, 193
 Conze, Edward, 5n10
 Cooke, Nola, 10
 Copernican theory, 172
 Council of Ministers (*hlut-daw*), 58,
 66–67, 97, 191–92, 246, 253, 257
 Cox, Hiram, 156, 176
- Cox's Bazaar, 115
 Crawford, John, 55, 55n11, 122–23, 157, 158
 Crystal Palace, 220
 Cultural Museum, Mandalay, 199n53
 Cutter, Otis T., 183, 185–86
- Dabayin, 62n32
 Dacca, 111–12
 daguerreotype apparatus, 197
 Dalabàn, 135–37
 Dalhousie, Marquess of, 198n51
 Danube River, 52
 Darwin, Charles, 127
 De Brito, Philip (aka Nga Zinga), 150–52
 Dhajaraja. See Abhiraja myth
 Dhammabinanda, Shin, 20, 96, 99, 103,
 204
 Dhammacetti, King, 106, 152
 Dhammadhara, Shin, 20, 26, 96
 Dhammananda, Shin, 20
dhammaraja, 90, 200–203
 Dhammasiri, Shin, 43
dhammathats, 78, 85, 169. See Manu,
 Code of
Diana, 157–58, 160
Digest of the Burmese Buddhist Law, 259
Dipavamsa, 169
 disease, 65, 65n45, 250
 Do Wei, 83
 Dwaya sect, 209, 211
- East India Company, 64n41, 111–12, 151,
 223
 ecclesiastical censor, 91, 99, 103
 ecclesiastical lands, supervisor of, 91
 eclipses, 165–66, 170
 electricity, 146, 148
 generators 146, 157, 229n24
 lighting, 229n24
 machine, 155
 motor, 146
 plant, 229
 shocks, 148n7
 embryo Buddha, 75, 101
 encyclopedias, 17, 161
Encyclopaedia Britannica, 162
Rees' Cyclopaedia, 161–65, 230

- engineering, 230–31
 ethnicity, 14, 53, 71, 126, 134, 137, 139,
 142–44, 261, 267, 268, 269n10
 Europe and the Europeans, 17, 108, 113,
 115, 120–21, 123, 126–27, 129–31, 137,
 145, 147–56, 159, 161–73, 179, 180, 182,
 193, 195–99, 220–226, 228–33,
 236–43, 247–48, 251, 254, 259,
 247–48, 262, 264, 267
 extra-terrestrials, 171–72
 Faraday, Michael, 146
 Ferguson, John P., 90
 festivals, 30, 69
 Finlay, Kirkman, 67n52, 247, 265
 firearms, 160, 197, 264
 Florida, Nancy K., 10
 forest-dwelling monks. *See* monks,
aranyavasi
 Fort Gloucester, 147, 175
 France and the French, 1, 146, 150, 157,
 173, 196, 197, 229–31, 236–38, 240,
 242
 Franco-Prussian War, 230, 240
 Franklin, Benjamin, 220, 221
 Frederick, William H., 215n44
 free men (*athis*), 14, 61, 64, 138
 Fukien, 149n8
 Fulton, Robert, 157
 “future shock,” 148n7
 Fytche, Albert, 234, 236
 Gaung, Kin-wun Mìn-gyi Û, 68, 153, 165,
 220, 221, 225–27, 233–40, 242–47,
 250–59, 263, 265, 268
 Geary, Grattan, 254n34
 genealogies, 121n21
 geography, 147, 155, 162, 169, 170, 173,
 175–78, 181, 196, 227, 230. *See also*
 globes; maps and mapmaking
 geology, 230
 geometry, 230
Glass Palace Chronicle, 7, 15, 47n56, 62,
 72, 82, 88, 106, 109–10, 116–24,
 128–29, 142–45, 267, 268
 globes, 173, 176–79, 169, 181
 grammars, 61, 100, 261
Great Chronicle, 7, 73, 81, 117–19, 123–24,
 143, 151, 169, 214
 Great Famine, The (Burma), 102
Great Kòn-baung Chronicle, 7, 72, 124
Great New Chronicle, 15, 87, 116, 119, 136,
 141, 267
Gulhatthadipani, 41
 Gunaganda, Shin, 23
 Gunalankara, Shin (Manle *hsayadaw*),
 23, 27, 37, 96
 Gunaratanasaka, Shin, 23
 Gunasara, Shin, 20, 23, 26
 Gunasiri, Shin (Mìn-O *hsayadaw*), 20,
 23, 37, 96, 204
 Gunasiri, Shin (of Yemyein), 20, 26
 Gutenberg, Johannes, 182
 Gyaung, Û, 68
 Hall, D. G. E., 130
 Hallisey, Charles, 5, 6
 Hamilton, Alexander, 131–32
 Hancock, Royal B., 183, 184n8
 Hannay, Captain S. F., 121
 Hardiman, J. P., 69
 Harvey, G. E., 124
 Helfer, Dr. Johann, 137
 hill tribes, 63n35, 80
 historians and historiography, 2, 3, 9, 14,
 71, 115, 267
hlut-daw. *See* Council of Ministers
 Hngetwin *hsayadaw*, 211–13
 Hngetwin sect, 209, 211
 Holy Land, 173
 Hough, George H., 183
 Hpayà-gyi Pagoda, 206
 Hpo, Û, 244, 255–56
 Hpyaw, Û, 78–79, 81
 Hsà-lin-gyi forest monastery, 20
 Hsa-lin-myó, 37n32
 Hsin-dè, 23, 33
 Hsin-dè *hsayadaw*. *See* Shin Nyana
 Hsin-pyu-ma-shin, 245, 247
 Hsin-pyu-shin, King, 45, 58, 77–78, 83,
 84, 91, 97, 145, 166, 218
 Htin Aung, Maung, 6n12, 57–58, 207n19,
 209–12
 human sacrifice, 249

- I-naung Wuda Zat*, 53
 Imperial School of Arts and Manufac-
 tures (Paris), 231
 Inda-sarà, Shin, 98
 India and the Indians, 10–12, 16, 45, 46,
 47, 49, 58, 79–80, 82, 86, 87, 112,
 117–19, 121, 125, 141, 143, 149, 153, 166,
 182, 197, 199, 202, 224, 226, 267
 Indobhasa, Shin, 20
 Indra. *See* Thagya
 informants, 5n1
 information revolution, 53, 108, 228
 inscriptions, 94–95, 109–11, 116, 121
 intellectual change, 2–4, 8–11, 14–16,
 18–19, 30, 69, 83, 154–55, 167, 181,
 194, 233, 243, 261–62, 265–66,
 268–69
Introduction to the Golden Palace, 87, 140
 Introini, Barbieri d', 229n23
Investigator, The, 186, 191
 Irrawaddy River, 33, 61, 184, 222, 224
 Irrawaddy Valley, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 64,
 74, 79, 87, 99, 110, 143
 Italy and the Italians, 158, 183, 197,
 229n23, 237, 238, 240
 Jagara, Shin (Mìn-ywa *hsayadaw*), 96
 Jambudipa, Shin, 41
 Japan and the Japanese
 contemporary, 7
 invasion of Burma (1942), 266
 Meiji, 238
 Java, 10, 114
Jewelled Mirror, The, 57
Journal of the Burma Research Society, 5
 Judson, Dr. Adoniram, 113, 131, 164,
 173–76, 191
 Kachins, 62
 Kadus, 136
 Kalà, Û, 7, 73–74, 81, 94, 110–11, 116–19,
 123–24, 133, 141, 151, 169
 Kale, 62, 213
 Kalyana, Shin, 97
 Kalyana-sakka, Shin, 20
 Kalyanadhaja, Shin, 20, 23, 26
 Kalyani Inscription, 141n49
 Kanaung, Prince, 228, 230, 232
 Kani, 15, 20, 37, 204–6
 Kanyans, 143
 Karen (language), 190n27
 Karens, 138, 144, 184
 Kato *hsayadaw*. *See* Shin Dhammadhara
 Khaing, Û, 174, 176–78, 185–86
 Kincaid, Eugenio, 154, 157n24, 163, 170–71,
 176, 178–79, 184–88, 191–94
 kingship, 16–17, 45, 71–75, 78–80, 83–85,
 89–90, 104, 108, 110, 112, 119, 134,
 241, 201, 214–15, 218–19, 241–43, 248,
 250, 258, 263
 proper role of, 241, 265
 royal legitimacy, 116, 153, 233, 261
 in the West, 242
 knowledge, 11–12, 14, 16, 17, 30, 46–47, 50,
 73, 120, 132, 149, 151, 159–75, 180, 201,
 204, 229, 230, 236, 238–40, 243, 263,
 264
 authority regarding, 9, 262
 disconnection of Europeans from,
 264–65
 Indian learning, 12, 119, 238, 243, 265
 “information overload,” 148n7
 local, 161, 161n35
 old learning, 153, 167, 201, 233, 243,
 262, 268–69
 transfer of, 242, 264
 universal truths, based on, 265
 and Western learning, 3, 53, 147–49,
 153, 155, 166, 170–73, 179–82, 201,
 218, 221–23, 225, 227, 230, 232–33,
 238, 239, 243, 258, 262, 268–69
 Koenig, William J., 3n4, 45, 64, 65n43,
 66, 78
 Kuthodaw Pagoda, 215
 Kyan-zittha, King, 70
 Kyano, 23
 Kyaukka, 15
 Kyaukmyet, 15n32
 Kyein, Û, 244
kyi-wun (head of royal granaries), 61
 Laka, Shin, 103
 Lane, Charles, 156, 165, 196
 and dictionary project 131n16, 164–65

- legal texts, 72, 74–76, 84, 225, 261
 Legislative Council (Burma), 259
 Lehman, F. K., 144
 Lezin, 245
 Lieberman, Victor B., 3n4, 4, 29n15, 48, 55n12, 63–64, 66n50, 126, 133, 135, 138
Life of Min-ra-za-gri of Arakan, 79, 82–83, 110, 112, 141–43
Lineage of the Religion, 15, 123, 145, 152, 214, 267
 literacy, 40, 47–48, 50, 53–57, 93, 114, 139, 193, 264
 literati, 1, 3, 9–12, 14–17, 19, 48, 50–51, 53, 58, 60, 62, 65, 68–76, 78, 79, 81, 83–87, 93, 106, 108–9, 112, 114–15, 118, 123, 124, 126, 133, 140–41, 143, 145, 148–49, 151–155, 162, 164, 165, 167, 168, 170, 178–82, 189, 193, 201–3, 205, 213n38, 215, 223, 227, 228, 233, 238–39, 241, 243, 250, 256, 258–65, 267–69
 London, 261
 Low, James, 56, 57n19, 139
 Lower Chindwin River Valley, 15, 32, 64, 92
 machinery, 158, 184, 220–21, 237, 240
 Maha Bandula (I), 15, 268
 Maha Bandula (II), 15
 Maha-damá-thin-gyan, 62. *See also* Shin Nyanabhivamsa
 Maha-damá-ya-za-di-pati, 33, 36, 86
maha-dan-wun. *See* ecclesiastical censor
 Maha-min-htin-kyaw, 174
 Maha-thi-ha-thu-ra, 58–59, 85–86
 Maha Thilawuntha, Shin, 81
 Maha-thiri-utta-ma-jaya, 76
 Maha-tissa, Shin, 20
 Maha-zei-yá-thein-hka, 79–80
 Mahabodhi Temple, 147, 175–76
Maharaja Dhammathat, 78
 Mahasammata, 71, 75, 78–82, 85, 87, 112, 118, 141, 153, 233, 248–49
 Maier, Hendrick M. J., 10
 Maitreya Buddha, 90, 94, 101
 Makkara, Prince, 153, 161–66, 171–72, 178, 181, 184–86, 239
 Malcom, Howard, 56, 57n19, 139n44
 Mandalay, 1, 136, 158, 179, 198n51, 199, 209, 214, 218, 224, 229n22, 232, 242, 249, 259, 265
Mandalay Gazette, 199, 237
Mandalay-ket-thas, 220, 223, 226, 227, 230, 233, 238, 239, 241, 242, 251, 254, 258
 Manimala, Shin, 23, 26, 30, 37n32, 38, 39, 96, 106, 151–52
 Manipur, 16, 45, 46, 49, 52, 63, 125, 153, 202
 Maniratana monk, 41
 Manle, 23, 37
 Manle *hsayadaw*. *See* Shin Gunalankara
 Mans, 208
 Manu, Code of, 75, 76, 78, 85
 Manu-vannana Kyaw-din, 78
 Manucci, Niccolao, 54–55
 maps and mapmaking, 169, 176, 179, 181
 Burmese, 63n35, 176, 179
 Worcester Outline Maps, 173
 world, 173, 174, 178
 Martaban, 139
 mass production, 9, 179, 190, 194, 195
 Maulmain, 183, 187, 190, 195, 223
 Maung Maung, 59–60, 85–86
 Maungdaung *hsayadaw* (first). *See* Shin Nyanabhivamsa
 Maungdaung *hsayadaw* (second). *See* Shin Nyeyyadhamma
 Maungdaung Village, 1–2, 15, 17, 20, 23, 33, 44, 61, 62, 95, 123, 203–6, 214, 217, 203n4, 206
 “Mechanical Turk,” 220–21, 239
 medicine and physicians
 Burmese, 30, 52, 168, 208, 225–27, 233
 Burmese dislike of Western medicine, 225n14, 226n15
 European, 150, 155, 167, 168, 225–27, 229, 230
 Indian, 226
 Mei-hiti *hsayadaw*. *See* Shin Manimala
 Meiktila, 64
 memorization, 42–44
 Mendelson, E. Michael, 96

- merchants, no role in Burmese intellectual life, 10m19
 Mergui, 223
 Min-gaung, 73n5, 81
 Min-gaung-naw-rahta, 77
 Min-gyaw-shwe-daung, 95
 Min-gyi-swa-saw-kei, King, 81
 Min-hla-naw-rahta, 154, 168
 Min-O, 37
 Min-O *hsayadaw*. *See* Shin Gunasiri (of Kani)
 Min-ya-za, 73, 81
 Min-yè-nanda-meit, 168
 Min-yei Kyaw-din, 87n46
 Min-ywa *hsayadaw*. *See* Shin Jagara
 Mindaingbin, 233
 Mindon, King, 30, 123, 155–56, 162, 169, 180, 193, 196–203, 205–18, 221, 222, 227–51, 254, 256, 263
 Mingun, 90, 99, 103, 108
 Mingun Pagoda, 99, 108
 Mogallana, 97
 Mogaung, 62
 Mohnyin, 62
 Mok-hsò-bo, 63, 72, 74, 76, 207
 Mon, 78, 114, 124, 126, 129, 132–33, 135–37, 139–43, 145
 Mon language, 139, 190n27
 Mongkut, King, 159–60, 170, 227
 monks, monastic order, and monasticism, 18, 19, 41, 55, 58, 61, 90, 91, 93, 94, 96–98, 100, 104, 107, 216, 261, 263, 267
 aranyavasi monks, 26, 28–35, 39, 41, 49, 209, 211
 gamavasi monks, 26, 29–36, 211
 monastic code, 11, 16, 26, 27, 29, 35, 36, 39, 43, 44, 94–95, 97–98, 100, 204, 210–13, 263
 monastic community, 11, 15, 16, 19, 23, 26, 28, 44. *See also* robe controversy
 Monywa, 1, 15, 17, 32n24, 208, 213n38
 Monywè, 15
 Monywè *hsayadaw*, second. *See* Nò, Û
 Mount Myinmo (Mount Meru) 15, 89, 172
 Mrauk-U, 52, 79, 83, 87, 112, 117, 133, 141
 Mros, 133–34
 Mu River, 15
 Mu Valley, 61, 64, 119
 Muda, 62
 Muddha Beiktheik, 84, 86, 280
 Mugs, 115
 Munindaghosa, Shin, 20, 29, 40–42
 Murshidabad, 112
 museums, 227
 Myagun-daung Pagoda, 100
 Myat San, Û, 85, 135–36
 Myaung-wun, 136
 Mye, Maung, 231
 Myè, Û, 261n2
 Myei-du, 65
 Myingun Prince, 232
 Myingundaing Prince, 232
 Myingyan, 64
 Myinsaing, 31
 Myò, Maung, 161
 myths, 2, 84, 116–18, 120–21, 132, 268
 Nagas, 62
 Nan-dá-bayin, King, 141
 Nandamala, Shin (Sonda *hsayadaw*), 26, 37, 75, 96
 Naono, Atsuko, 161n35, 225n14, 227n20
 Napoleon III, 240
 Nat-shin-ywè Regiment, 68
Nats, 89, 225, 277
 nation, 17, 122, 125, 126, 130, 132, 164, 168, 173, 186, 267, 268
 Burmese, 5, 130, 242
 national identity, 9
 nationalism, 8, 129
 nation-state, 132
 Naung-daw-gyi, King, 42, 60, 77, 91, 114
 navigation, 230
 Nayawaya, 87n46
New Pagan Chronicle, 88
 New Testament. *See* Bible
 New York, 157
 Newaz, Gharib, 45
 newspapers, 17, 195–200, 265
 Neyin, 23
 Nga-ga-byin, 15
 Nga Mi's chronicle, 116

- Ngyayano, 23, 96
 Nò, Û (Second Monywa *hsayadaw*), 62, 88, 111, 116, 123–24, 142–43
 North America. *See* United States
 Nyana, Shin (Hsin-dè *hsayadaw*), 96
 Nyana, Shin (of Pakàn-gyi), 37
 Nyana, Shin (of Taung-dwin-gyi), 42
 Nyanabhivamsa, Shin, 1, 18, 19, 20, 23, 26–29, 31–34, 35n29, 37–47, 50, 58, 62, 84, 86, 88, 92–96, 98–101, 103, 106–7, 108, 114, 116, 119, 120, 123–24, 138, 141, 143, 145, 149, 152–53, 166, 171, 189, 200–206, 209, 211, 213–15, 219, 228, 233–34, 243, 263, 268. *See also* Maha-damā-thin-gyan
 Nyanavara, Shin, 23
 Nyatti-satutta rite, 105
 Nyaung-sin-shwè, 33
 Nyaung-yan Min, King, 141
 Nyaunggan, 20
 Nyaunggan monk. *See* Shin Sudham-maransi
 Nyeyyadhamma, Shin (Second Maung-daung *hsayadaw*), 123, 200, 203–9, 211–16
 Obasa, Shin, 97
 Oersted, Hans Christian, 146
 Okpo *hsayadaw*, 211–12
 Okudaira, Ryūji, 46n53, 86
 Old Arakan Chronicle. *See* *Life of Min-ra-za-gri of Arakan*
 Old Pagan Chronicle, 81
 orientalism and orientalist scholarship, 5
Origins of Species, 127
 orthodoxy, religious, 6, 16, 268
 Pagan, 1, 34, 48, 63, 70, 74, 105, 111, 116, 118–19, 120–21, 127, 132–34, 143, 145, 176
 Pagan, King, 30, 204, 218
 Pagan-gei Township, 253
 pagoda slaves, 91, 109
 Pakàn-gyi, 23, 27, 41, 96, 206
 Pakokku sect, 209
 Palaing, 23, 26
 Palestine, 173
 Pali (language), 123, 138–39, 167
 Pali texts, 6, 9, 11, 12, 18, 19, 26, 35, 37, 40–47, 49, 50, 52, 93, 95–97, 99–100, 101, 104–5, 107, 119, 145, 152, 153, 204, 208, 215, 217, 218, 251
 Pán-kyi, 15, 66, 69
 Pan-yin, 20
 Paññasami, Shin, 35n29, 42n43, 123, 152, 203n4, 209, 213, 214
 Parama, Shin, 97
 paramats, 90, 207–8
 Paton, Charles, 115
 Pavaramanju, Shin, 26
 Pe Maung Tin, Û, 142
 Pegu, 141n49, 51, 63, 64, 71–72, 74–76, 84, 106, 107, 125, 126, 131, 133, 135–37, 139, 141, 150–52, 176, 197, 268
 Pemberton, Robert Boileau, 116
 Phayre, Arthur P., 116, 124, 127–28, 128n8, 130n10, 139n43, 158, 169, 172–73, 180
 photography, 155, 257
 physical appearance, 132n20
 physiology, 230
 Pi Sheng, 182
 Pinya, 31
pitaka-taik-daw. *See* Religious Texts Library
Pitaka-yakkhanagandha, 97
 Pixii, Hyppolyte, 146
 Po, Û, 208
 Pò Hlaing, Û, 233, 238, 247–50, 252, 259, 264
Poem of the Grantee of Paleik, 79–81
Poem for the Arakanese Princess, 110
 Poetry, 8n16
 “Pong Chronicle,” 116
 Portugal and the Portuguese, 30, 126, 150–51, 155, 163
 Pranke, Patrick Arthur, 18n1, 100
 printing, 151, 182–86, 190, 194, 199, 226
 Chinese, 182
 chromolithography, 179
 hand-presses, 190
 intaglio process, 174
 lithography, 173–74, 179
 movable type, 182
 planographic process, 174

- power-press, 190n27
 relief process, 174
 Privy Council, 60, 66–67, 85, 178, 191, 244, 253
 Prome, 20, 121, 122, 128, 212
 Prussia, 197, 230, 238,
 Pubba monastery, 41
pwe-gyaung monks, 30
 Pyu, 119–20, 133, 143
 Pyu-zaw-hti, 70, 73–74, 79, 83, 87–88, 117–20, 134, 263
Rajabhiseka, 46, 95
Rajadhiraja Vilasini, 202
Ramayana, 54
 Ramree, 111
 Rangoon. *See* Yangon
Rangoon Chronicle, 195
Rangoon Gazette, 195, 265
 Rees, Abraham, 161
 regionalism, 14, 48, 58, 71, 108, 267
 Reid, Anthony, 4, 8
 religious commentaries, 8n16
 Religious Texts Library (*pitaka-taik-daw*), 97–100
 Restored Taung-ngu Dynasty, 33, 36, 62, 63, 67, 70–74, 79, 86, 141
 revenue inquests (*sit-tàns*), 60, 138
 Reynolds, Craig J., 9
 robe controversy, 34–39, 43, 96, 98, 209
 Atins, 26, 35–38, 43, 94–98
 Ayouns, 26, 34–39, 43, 44, 93, 95–98, 211
 Robertson, Thomas Campbell, 115
 Rodgers, Mr., 161, 170
 Royal Guard, 66–68, 244
 Inner Brigade, 66–69, 234, 244–45, 251, 253, 255
 Red Gate Guards, 67, 68
 Outer Brigade, 66–69
 royal library, 51, 52, 162, 169, 261
 royal records, destruction of (1885), 260–61, 261n2
 Russia, 173, 197, 238
 Sagaing, 58–59, 93, 199, 211
 Saint-Cyr military academy, 231
 Saito, Teruko, 244
 Sakiyan clan, 82, 118, 119, 153
 Salu, 23
Sammohavinodani, 41
 San, *hsaya*, 266
 San Shwe Bu, 5n11
 Sandá-lin-ka, Shin, 81, 117
 Sandasara, Shin, 20
 Sanei, King, 36
 Sangermano, Fr., 86, 101
 Sanskrit texts, 16, 19, 45–47, 49, 52, 54, 86, 95, 99, 153, 249
 Saravamsa, Shin, 23
sasana. *See* Buddhism
 sciences, 230, 265
 Scott, J. G., 69
 Scott, James C., 161n35
Second Great Chronicle, 123–24
 Seinda Kyaw-thu. *See* Aw, Û
 Serampore, 183
 servicemen, 55, 61, 64–65, 69, 102, 138, 150, 244–45, 255
 Shans, 127–28, 136, 142, 227
 Shwe Dagon Pagoda, 145, 217
 Shwe-lu, Maung, 168
 Shwe O, Û, 231–32
 Shwe Tun, Û, 146–48
 Shwebo. *See* Mok-hsò-bo
 Shwedaung *hsayadaw*, 96
 Shwegyin *hsayadaw*. *See* Shin Zagara
 Shwegyin sect, 209, 212–13, 274
 Siam and the Siamese, 9, 12, 27, 29, 52, 57, 65, 101–2, 125, 137–38, 158, 160, 169, 170, 175, 197, 199, 217, 228, 241, 254
 Siam Nikaya, 13, 27, 28, 39, 40, 42, 47, 49
 Simons, Thomas, 56, 176, 178, 184
 Singu, 37–38, 57–61, 77–78, 81–85, 87, 91, 93, 96–97, 154
 Siriseththa, Shin, 23
sit-tàns. *See* revenue inquests
 Smith, Donald E., 92, 132, 134
 So, Û, 252
 solar system, 170–73, 176, 236
 Sonda, 26, 37
 Sonda *hsayadaw*. *See* Shin Nandamala

A sophisticated, deeply original book that will shift the paradigms of precolonial Southeast Asian history. It breaks new ground in four major areas: It is the first intellectual history of any mainland Southeast Asian country prior to the colonial onslaught; it is the first study for any Southeast Asian country of the intersection between cultural change and politics; it is the first study of regionalism in national/imperial politics; and it is the first detailed study of the development of protonationalist thought in precolonial Southeast Asia. In sum, this is a major scholarly achievement.

—VICTOR LEEBERMAN, The Marvin B. Becker Professor of History and Professor of Southeast Asian History, University of Michigan



Ann Arbor
Centers for South and
Southeast Asian Studies
www.press.umich.edu

ISBN 0-87146-093-5

